THUMP'S CLIENT.

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BY

CHARLES D. KNIGHT.

When critics cry 'twere better thus and so,
We'll say, good sirs, if you have book ne'er writ,
Stir you the fire, and when the embers glow,
Baste well the roast, and turn yourselves the spit.

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THUMP'S CLIENT.

CHAPTER I.

MIXING METHOD WITH TIME.

"I'm in a hurry! I'm in a hurry! I'm always in a hurry. How queer it would seem not to be in a hurry. The clothes would pile up very high, and the boots and shoes never know their mates, if I wasn't in a hurry. So much to be done and so little time to do it. When the sun goes down I'm sorry, for people won't make bargains then, and maybe I couldn't tell the quality of the gatherings either. I could see better once than I can now I lose on every pair of boots that don't match. I'm always awake before the sun, for there is so much to do, and no time to do it."

Thus chattering to himself, the Little Man in black bobbed in and out, around and behind the carts, cabs, and drays, till he had threaded himself successfully out of the bustle of Mayfair and into the quiet of Blue Bottle Court—so named because at its corner tavern swung a board bottle painted blue and crowned by a red stopper much too large for the bottle's proportions.

He passed quickly by the open door of the Blue Bottle; his life was so busy it never occurred to him that he could go in. He carried on his shoulders a sack of red velvet, once of the softest pile and richest hue. Its contents, whatever they might be, were deposited with care, as could be seen by the contour of the half-filled sack. His long black stockings were of the finest silk, but here and there neatly mended; his breeches, but little below the knee, were of black velvet, worn smooth in spots, and rusty all over; his coat was black also, and cut very

much after the manner of a jockey's—indeed it were not surprising if it were the cast-off of such a personage.

The sack was never very weighty, but to maintain equilibrium it had required him to bend his back, which was much longer in proportion to his legs than it should have been according to the laws of anatomical symmetry. He laid down the pack beside a step leading to a house which was unpretentious enough to rise but one story, fumbled in his pocket for the key, drew it forth, opened the door into a passage which led into a room which a curiosity collector would give much to inspect, and more to choose from its contents. He deposited his burden, as gently as if it were a child upon what had once been a *prie dieu*, and on whose tufted satin many a fair penitent had, no doubt, sighed for deeds of commission and sins of omission. But the satin had lost its shimmer, many of the tufts were gone, and it had taken the downward track which would probably end in the ragman's shop, but at present was the pride of the Little Man.

He was glad to be unloaded, and notwithstanding there was so much to do, he thrust his palms outward, fell upon them, turned as many somersaults across the room as the space would admit, turned around, went back in the same gymnastic style, and then springing to his feet said, "I'm straight now. How would I ever keep my feet nimble, my legs limber, and my back straight, if I did not take time just at this part of the day to"—and another series of somersaults completed the sentence.

"Now there is something to do," and he smacked his lips at a slice of uncooked bacon, which he drew from the cupboard. "It's well there's time to cook you, or I'd"—and his small black eyes twinkled merrily, as he chopped off a bit, tossed it into his large, cleanly cut mouth, and ground it with his small sharp teeth. "Yes, when there's no time I'd do that, ha! ha! But now there's time, for the sun takes time to rest, and I'm obliged to, so I'll"—while saying this, he raked the coals, for he always kept the fire burning—there was not time to light it every day—and laid the slice of bacon on to broil. The teapot was set beside it and the lid was soon hopping up and falling down proclaiming the heated

agitation within. From the sack he drew a small parcel, whose numerous wrappings to protect it from soiling the day's gatherings, he took off and revealed a loaf of bread.

"Ha! how I make the most of time. Many a man would have said, 'Go home, leave your load; go back and buy your bread.' There's where I make and they lose. While the bacon is browning a little more and the tea clearing itself, I cut the bread and lay on the butter. I don't go out to buy and come back to find the bacon burned to a crisp and the tea stone cold. I make the most of time, so now I sit down to take supper with everything just right and myself in no hurry, for there's plenty of time, but only at this hour in the day though. I always bear that in mind. Breakfast must be hurried, for the later I am the higher the clothes will pile."

And the Little Man chattered like a magpie and ate like a hungry boy. The end of his long nose was lost now and then within the ample boundaries of a cup of pure translucent china, fair and frail enough for the fairest and frailest in the land. From it he sipped, and in it he stirred cream and sugar by turns, till it just suited his palate, and then the draughts were long, alternating with large mouthfuls of the bacon and bread till there was not enough left for the dessert of a fly.

"Ha! ha! ha!" said he, rubbing his hands in satisfaction, "there's nothing like mixing method with time, if its not so plenty. Now, I clear the table so," and in a twinkling the china cup, the plate, which did not match the cup, but was just as fair, and the tin teapot with spoon, fork and knife, were hurried into a pan, and the water which method had put on the coals to heat while the owner was at supper, was freely poured over them; the laving with the aid of soap bringing them forth as clean and shining as the most scrupulous housekeeper could desire, they were placed on the shelf over the fire.

Brushing back the few ashes he had scattered on the hearth he drew from one corner of the room a large chair, made with as much consideration for the comfort of the sitter as for elegance of design. Its carving had lost here a leaf and there an angle, some of the claws on which it stood were gone and others were nicked, its covering was

of dark brown leather, soft in texture and like himself—well worn. Just then a voice cried from the top of a little case whose glass doors revealed bits of satin, velvet and silk, arranged as to color and material, on the lower shelf; bits of broken jewelry, ornaments and trinkets of almost any description, on the second; and rumpled, tumbled feathers and flowers, from the weighty plume of the defender of Her Majesty's possessions to the drooping spray from Her Highness's cast-off bonnet, on the top,—and from out all these came the voice "I'm in a hurry! I'm in a hurry! time's up! time's up!"

"Yes, time's always up with me," said the Little Man, "there is so much to do, and if it were not for method what should I get done? I never look at you when I come home, because if I did I should stop to gossip, and I could not cook, eat and talk to you properly at the same time, so I never know you're there till I am ready to look at the gatherings. What a saving of time! come down! come down!"

And down flew a pretty starling and perched on the back of the chair. She turned her head and looked down at the sack first with one eye and then with the other as much as to say, "Perhaps if I could look with them both at the same time, I'd see what it is to-night."

She did not wonder long, for her master saw the longing look and said, "Let's go and see." At the first word she whistled acquiescence and hopped on his shoulder: he stepped to the sack, took out a little tin box and out of the tin box a few hempen, a morsel of sweet fig and some crumbs of rich cake.

The bird whistled and fluttered her wings in gratitude for the remembrance, but she did not offer to taste them.

"The plainest first, it makes the digestion better," said the Little Man; and she flew into her cage, ate rather sparingly of the grain therein, drank of the fresh water the master brought, and listened, with all due respect, to what she had heard every night since she had come to reside in Blue Bottle Court. "If I did not work by method how much would you get, eh? While the maids have gone with my offer to their mistresses, I look for cages just outside the ladies' windows and these are what

the birds drop from them. Could I find time to spare from work to get these? No, not when there's so much to do and so little time to do it. Its method that brings these to you, dearie," and he laid his hand softly and tenderly on the starling's head. "Now, see how they taste: here's a bite of fig first, that is good for digestion; here's a hempen, that's rich, and too many would harm you; here's cake, and too much would make you sleep uneasily." Thus reasoning he gave her all he thought good for her and consistent with the portion left for the morrow, for every day did not bring as much as this day had done.

"It's a good child; it does just what the parent wants it to," said he, closing the box and laying it on the shelf. "Now let us look at the other gatherings."

"I'm in a hurry! I'm in a hurry!" said the starling.

"I'm not so much hurried at this time of the day," replied the Little Man, "but we'll see what we've brought. Here's a robe Lady Mary Susan Helen Florence was presented in some time ago, its been remade and retrimmed till it wont do again—and the few pounds this brought will buy a yard or two of lace, or one of those charming caps from Madame Makem's lovely assortment. This is what I heard her mother, the duchess, whisper to her, but I did not hear her say they would buy a good many yards of flannel, a pair of stout shoes, a load of coals, and pay a quarter's rent for many a poor soul I could tell them of. Such folks, dearie, have nothing to do and plenty of time to do it. Here's a coat, full dress, and of the finest threads —see how shiny. I paid more for it than I can get, I know, but the poor fellow who wore it looked so scared when I called; you see, he knew the knock of the tailor, the haberdasher, the wine merchant's clerk, and a host of others, but mine was a new one, and he thought what in the devil has come now? I read it in his face, but I only said, respectfully, 'You sent for me, sir, and I am at your service.'"

"'Ah, yes, yes, I remember,' said he, scratching his head as if he'd scratch up some recollection of having requested me to call—I know folks so well, dearie. 'I have some articles here that are not worn much, but their fit

and style don't suit too good to throw away—no use to keep—little short just now—remittance delayed—always give to the poor-box—disappointed if I can't. How much are they worth? In a great hurry this morning.' "

"I did'nt look at the clothes, but I looked at him and said, 'There's so much else to do, that there's no time to lie.' "

"'You've put your long nose right into it, so I'll own up: parent rich, stern, don't sympathize with youthful ardor; cards, wine, gentle sex—all devices of satan; debts heavy, knocks at the door heavy and heart heavy; can't pay, sorry for 'em—a hundred pounds in pocket and could go to America, seek a fortune, find it, come back and pay up with interest. Take your choice of fine clothes—no use for 'em.' "

"The poor fellow might have talked till this time, dearie, if there had not been so much to do and the bootmaker's boy hadn't so unceremoniously interrupted us. So I took this coat, this silk gown, these slippers, this pretty cushion, some cravats we'll come to soon, a few shirts, and best of all, these velvet shorts—left from a fancy costume, I suppose. We shall soon need them, so we will keep these, dearie, and some rainy day we'll make 'em over. Ah! here's something for our box of secrets, our state papers, we call 'em, a card—

"'Ralph Speeder, No. 36 Knickknack street, third door, second floor, I think. Well, I think too, he'll take speedy steps to get out of there with the pounds and pence I paid him. Poor fellow! he's got an empty head. We'll lay this card away, fold up our gatherings, light the candle, think a little, and say good night. To-morrow I shall have some fine additions for Mistress Bogg's collection. I must sleep well, for she is sharp, and drives a bargain as none but Mistress Boggs can. Poor Boggs, she's driven him almost to where she'll not get him back again. I whisper to him sometimes, 'Come and see me when there's plenty of time, and nobody sees you.' It would do him good to sit still a while, for he can't do that where she is. It's, 'Boggs, there is the shop-bell—if it's a customer call me;' 'Boggs, I hear a cat in the area!' Boggs, Boggs, whenever the wretched man is seated for

a bit of rest. What would I do, if I were Boggs? Dear me! there's no time now to think; I'll straighten myself out, and go to bed"—and the Little Man thrust out his hands, fell forward and turned as many somersaults up and down the room as he deemed necessary to the process of "straightening out."

"Now I'm straight," said he, jumping to his feet, "and in a hurry for the sun to come up, then I'm in a hurry all day. How queer it would be not to be in a hurry!" and with these meditations he opened the cage door: the starling flew in, perched herself for the night, the Little Man in black became a little man in white, snuffed out the candle, and hurried himself into the realms of sleep.

CHAPTER II.

THE READER IS INTRODUCED TO LUNLEY LANE.

A DOG, a blind man and a lawyer. Which was blind, the dog or the man? A question which would have sorely puzzled the dwellers in Lunley Lane, had they known, that concerning this blindness, exactly upon which one to place, it or whether to place it upon either, there had lately arisen much doubt in the mind of Miss Susan Thump, who, although not the oldest inhabitant, was the highest authority on all matters whether temporal or spiritual, in the aforesaid Lane.

Without Susan, the Lane, it is feared, could not exist, and without the Lane, it is known Susan could not exist, She was its head, heart and soul. Neighbors consulted her upon all important subjects. If a small advent was looked for, the doctor suggested "Miss Thump," in soft and insinuating accents, which meant, "If I am not there at the precise moment, do not fear." If a marriage was to take place in the Lane, there was Miss Thump; if a

soul was to exchange worlds, Miss Thump was there to close the eyes, place the pennies on the lids, cross the hands, darken the windows and knot the crape. On the day of burial she was at the door, to receive; to answer all questions concerning the departed, the disease, length of time sick, where buried, and the parting words with friends as the soul started on its last journey.

No wonder the Lunlies felt more secure when she was in attendance; the coming were tenderly helped in, the departing were as tenderly helped out of the world, and those who remained were guarded night and day, by her vigilance. No strangers went in and out of the Lane without her eyes following them. The daily traveller excited no suspicion, neither did the ordinary mendicant, but there was something about this blind man who had stood for many days at the corner of Lunley Lane and Wilton Road, which caused Susan much anxiety. He extended his hat, to be sure, and received alms therein with much gratitude; yet it was done with an air that Susan did not think altogether becoming to one in his station; and the dog, who evidently possessed his master's secret, for she was sure he had one, seemed to hold himself aloof from the dogs who lived in the Lane. Whenever they approached, he did not slink away as if he were dependent on the charity of their masters for a bone, but looked haughtily, even disdainfully on them, and growled savagely if they came too near.

One morning, while Miss Thump was peeping through the partially closed blinds which shaded her cozy little parlor, from which she could see the corner without the corner seeing her—and as Lunley Lane and Wilton Road cut each other at a very acute angle, her vision was not limited to the crossing of the two—she could see the man and his dog coming toward the Lane. The dog walked as consequentially as if he were leading a lord; and as this idea occurred to Miss Thump she said to herself, "Susan, here's something that must be closely attended to, the Lane may be in danger," and she thought of the probabilities of calls from home: she could count upon no expected blessings, under three or four months, marriages would not long detain her, and deaths, al-

though uncertain and often very inconvenient, were beyond her control, and to their attendant duties she was liable at any time, but she decided nothing else should interfere with her.

As the blind man and his dog were on the long crossing, which must necessarily be where the angle was so sharp, another pedestrian, having the Lane for his destination, likewise crossed from the other corner, and being in haste and much preoccupied with his own meditations ran against the blind man, thus incurring the displeasure of the dog, who did not hesitate to make it known by a low, ominous growl. The man very blandly begged pardon for such rudeness to one so afflicted, and attempted a reconciliation with the dog. A dog of plebeian origin would have been flattered by the pat and "nice fellow," which the man was about to bestow, but which he did not, for his dogship drew back, and added to the ominous growl as ominous a snarl.

"Quiet, Rover," said his master, "he means no harm; you are sometimes too sensitive, good fellow;" and passing his hand along the string reached Rover's head, and gave him loving pats, which told the attachment between the two vagrants.

"Very faithful, I see," said the man, with another bland smile, "always know where to find him. A very fortunate person you are, for one so unfortunate as to be blind. He has never played you false, eh?"

"No, never," returned the master, "and the only one I know whom I can honestly say as much for. This is a treacherous world, sir, a treacherous world;" and a long drawn breath spake of trouble untold.

"Yes," replied the other, breathing deeply also, as if in sympathy; "it occurs to me, that clients like your dog would be preferable to some men I know. When dogs are a little more developed, there may be such a thing. How charming it would be to have such clients—Carlo versus Rover, infringement on the Bone Rights or Kennel Privileges;" and he laughed so loud that Susan unbolted the blinds and stretched out as far as she dared, but could not catch a word.

"When dogs become developed, as you call it, enough

to go to law over their wrongs, they will cease to be faithful," said the blind man. "But I hear footsteps, and must move to the curb, or I may be jostled."

"How do you know they are coming your way?" asked the man.

"My hearing, like all afflicted as I am, is very acute, and I know, not only the direction, but, if I hear a person pass me often, I can distinguish his footstep as readily from any other as you can his face."

"Ah!" said the man—and a sudden thought seemed to strike him—"ah! indeed; and never confuse him with any other?"

"And never confuse him with any other," repeated the blind man with assurance.

"Do you get many pence at this corner? I have seen you here much of late. Wouldn't a richer neighborhood be a more profitable stand?"

"The richer, the less sympathy, I find, for the poor. The Lunlies, and the passers along the Wilton have been very kind to me. My wants are simple; and if a few pounds are left when I am gone, they must be spent for Rover's comfort so long as he lives, which I dare say will not be long without me."

"Here is a mite toward Rover's legacy, and if you ever find yourself in need of advice, legal, let me serve you gratis, that being one of my hobbies, and to serve all alike, the impecunious with the same zeal that I do the millionaire. Am often dubbed the counsellor-in-need; that is," he added, as he saw a smile upon the blind man's face, "that means the counsellor in time of need. I never ask, 'Are you able to pay?' when I see injustice done to a poor man."

The expression on the face of his listener somewhat confused him: it was an expression of contempt, mingled with suppressed merriment and annoyance—the curved mouth showed the contempt, the part about the eyes, not concealed by the colored spectacles, showed the merriment, and the contracted brow showed the annoyance.

"Good morning, sir; perhaps I shall meet you again," and he turned toward the Lane, when he suddenly bethought himself, that the blind man would not know

whom to ask for, if he should decide, upon short notice, to begin a journey on a Lane that is so broad and so long that the travellers through it never jostle each other, and are led through its vastnesses by their desires and aspirations. "Street beggars, like him, have been often found to hoard their pounds by the hundreds, even thousands," thought he, "and the legacy might not be small," so he walked back a few steps and said, "My name is Trout, sir, and my office at the other end of the Lane. If ever in trouble, I am your friend, good morning."

"You are very kind," replied the blind man in a more grateful manner than the lawyer thought he could exhibit. "I am poor, you see, and not likely to need your services, but I shall remember you with gratitude for your interest in me. Good day."

The lawyer walked rapidly away in the direction of his office, saying to himself, "It may be that I can pull that string. Knows a man by his footstep as well as I would by his face—that's good. Such a person would excite no suspicion," and the bland smile illuminated a face that was an ever-varying study. The eyes were small, black and deep set; twinkling little eyes, that might be quizzing you, or only laughing at his own craft and cunning, one could not tell which. A low forehead gave a sort of dogged expression; the nose was of a length that showed it would be very apt to poke itself anywhere, but if met with determination, very soon withdrawn. The mouth was the blandest of mouths; it certainly could never say an unpleasant thing; if it ever tried it was a failure. The head was small and bald, save a ring of short black hair, which was quite as pliable under the combined action of brush and comb as the same quantity of wires. The neck was short, and held the head well between the shoulders; the figure was tending toward portly. He always had a bustling air about his office, or when attending to business anywhere, leading the careless reader of character to believe him a man of great energy and industry.

And this was Mr. Trout, of the firm of Trout &—it shall come to light in time.

The blind man walked to his corner, listened for

comers and goers; there were none just then: he passed his hand along the string till he came to its end at which he again found Rover, patted him and said, "We will leave the Lane early to day, for our work is already done We have held our bait many days, but at last it has been nibbled, by and by we will draw it in, and find it has caught a—Trout. It is fine fishing, but chance has not brought him here, neither will chance guide me in my work."

Rover listened attentively, and expressed by a wag of the tail, and rubbing of the head against his master's face the most decided satisfaction in the piscatorial prospects, as well as the early withdrawal that day from the Lane.

Meantime Susan's curiosity had risen to the highest degree. Mr. Trout knew Susan, and Susan knew Mr. Trout, and now she must make it her business to know what made him linger in conversation with this poor blind man. Surely her work was increasing as the mystery deepened. She took, from a peg in the hall, her bonnet, and at once sallied forth; the little gate opened quickly, and clicked sharply under her nervous touch, and this click startled Mr. Trout—the very thing Susan desired.

"Ah, good morning, Miss Thump, fine air blowing;" and the blandness with which he spake would have won the admiration of a susceptible heart, but never of Susan's. Her knowledge of Mr. Trout was not alone by reputation, although this was good—for a lawyer shrewd, far sighted, sharp; but stealthy, cowardly, and intriguing, he really was: but this she learned long after through another source.

She returned his pleasant salutation, but the half suppressed, half audible "humph!" which followed, showed that she did not feel in the best possible humor.

The click of the gate had satisfied her; so offering no denial to the statement that a fine air was blowing, but acquiescing in a few words, she walked toward the Wilton, and he continued towards his office. She approached the corner in much doubt what to do, which Rover soon decided for her as she eyed him timidly—she had a strong aversion to the whole canine race—he eyed her a little wickedly, as if to say, "Not too close, m'am, I am attending to my own business, which is legitimate, though

it is superintending neither a birth, marriage nor funeral. If you've anything for my master, you can approach ; if not pass on—no prying though : he's blind, and I guard him from harm," and Miss Thump drew her skirts closely around her, and was about to say, " scat," but changed it to " shoo, go away."

The blind man felt that Rover, and some passer-by, were not of the same opinion, so commanded the dog to be quiet and said, " Do not fear, madam, he is harmless."

" Maybe he is to you, but I never feel safe, you can't tell when they'll bite," said she, trying to show resentment to the dog, but secretly thanking him for having given her this opportunity of conversing with his master.

" But Rover is an exception. He is just and will fight for right, but he is not treacherous," replied the blind man. " Do you not live in the Lane? "

Susan looked a reply, which would have been, " Humph ! you can't see ? I thought so," but for once withheld her first thoughts and merely said, " Yes, I have never lived anywhere else."

" I asked," continued the man without sight, " because I knew your footsteps. You have passed within my hearing many times, and I shall tell Rover he must never again alarm you, although I know he meant no harm. Do you hear what I say, Rover ? " As the dog's look of assent could not be seen by his master, he assured him of his understanding by a short quick bark. " Now," said he, turning to where he thought Miss Thump to be, " you need not fear to pass whenever occasion requires ; he never disobeys me."

" I don't think he would bite if you was here, but I would'nt trust him if you wasn't ; I never did like dogs," said she, taking notes as fast as possible—hands brown, but not hardened from labor ; beard and hair soft and glossy, which showed care ; feet shapely and covered by boots, which though well worn, were once made to fit ; clothes and hat ditto.

His eyes were covered by dark colored spectacles, not only in front, but at the sides ; although it was difficult to tell, to a certainty—and upon certainties she prided her-

self—she thought the lids closed over well rounded balls ; but this she did not fully satisfy herself upon, so slipping a shilling in his hand walked on.

The interview was not satisfactory ; she had intended finding out what Mr. Trout had said, but there was a dignity about the man that she recognized, though unconsciously, for she was piqued that she dared not ask him who he was and where he lived. She continued her walk, dropped in to chat with a friend and of course could stay but a minute ; the minute, however, grew to an hour, the hour doubled and trebled itself till the time for Samuel's dinner grew on apace, and to be late with that was almost a sin in Susan's code.

"Samuel must not be kept waiting," she said ; "I shall have just time, if I hurry, to see that the maid has left nothing undone."

One cold night in December, when Miss Thump was younger—but we dare not say how young—she was aroused by the alarm of fire. She arose quickly, and with feminine instinct first sniffed to see if it were in her own house, then raised the window and thrust her head into such piercing cold that the warmth a fire suggested was not unpleasant. Footsteps were hurriedly passing her door, many of the Lunlies had already gone : this would never do, so, clad in thick clothes and stout shoes, she was soon with them ; her ambition and pride were never to be outdone by her neighbors.

The bells rang, the firemen ran, Miss Thump ran ; the crowd increased, and the fire increased : its forked tongues shot out and up, and lapped in its prey greedily timber and tiles, rags and ribbons, women and children—anything to feed it—no distinction, no mercy—no mercy for this child ? it has devoured its father, its mother, its bed, its room, all but the window, and at this it appears. The crowd is hushed, the moment an eternity. "A ladder ! a ladder !" but who will venture ? the walls are already swaying, his doom is sealed.

A woman, small in size, lithe in limb, almost crazed at the sight, elbows her way through the crowd. Their hearts stand still. What can she do ? mount the ladder ? Fool ! suicide !

Before the next heart-throb Susan Thump stood at its foot, with the child in her arms.

A shout went up higher than the flames, and louder than the roaring elements.

The child lay fainting, but she would allow no one to take it from her: she bore it gently away, and Lunley Lane became its home.

CHAPTER III.

SAMUEL MESHACH I BAPTIZE THEE.

THE fire was out, as all fires are after a certain time. The people were out, as all poor people are after the fire is out. The furniture that was saved, was out—in the street—and the owners, if there were any, were watching their goods and the dying embers. Husbands were enquiring for wives, and wives for husbands; children were running to and fro looking for parents; wreckers were in search of what the fire had left half consumed, not what the waters had washed up on the sand.

No enquiry had yet been made for the bundle Susan had carried away in her arms. No father said, "Where is my son?" No mother, "Where is my child, my first-born?" The smouldering embers gave not up their dead save in smoke and ashes.

Susan's home was a scene of confusion: warm baths, mustard draughts and many other restoratives were used; the best room and the best bed were appropriated to the little waif, and it seemed extremely doubtful what course he would take, for he was at the forks of the road, and cared not a whit whether he travelled awhile longer on the same, or crossed over, and commenced a journey on the one which has no end.

Miss Thump began with characteristic forethought to question herself as to whom she could ask to superintend matters, in case she should be called upon to play the role of chief mourner. But this proved unnecessary, for

after hours of unconsciousness, the eyelids parted, the eyes gazed upon strange faces, and the limbs relaxed. She watched by the bedside with windows darkened, and in whispered accents to the doctor and the neighbors, would often ask, "Do you think he will live?"

After a day of painful suspense, the doctor, the neighbors, Susan and the boy decided that he would. Her pride was again aroused; she felt herself to be the heroine and the boy the hero of the fire. She had already read the account of "Thrilling scenes at the fire last night," her name in the Daily Bee and other papers. She saw a column devoted to the incident headed, "Daring exploit by Susan Thump." The hour she had sought had arrived, the fame she desired was hers.

Mutton broth, oatmeal and wine soon brought renewed life and strength to the supposed dead, and joy and pride to her heart. Poor woman, gentle and loving as she was, she had never experienced that thrill of pleasure that springs from a mother's heart at the sound of the voice which lisps for the first time "Mamma."

She felt sure that this child had been born for her to love and cherish. Days passed and no claimant appeared. Notices had been posted around the burnt buildings and also published in the papers concerning the whereabouts of the rescued one, signed, "Susan Thump, No. 10 Lunley Lane."

The paragraphs referring to her bravery she read and re-read, cut out and pasted on the blank leaf of her Bible.

"When I am dead and gone," said she, "the world will know what Susan Thump has done."

The child was often asked his name, and the name of his father, but the shock had so affected his memory that the past seemed a blank, hence the necessity of giving him a name soon presented itself. She thought she would consult the Rev. Josiah Peerie, as he was her authority in some temporal as well as all spiritual matters. Had she not literally "plucked a brand from the burning?" and for this deed she felt that her crown would be brighter, her robe whiter, and her harp vibrate more sweetly to her touch in the Great Hereafter.

What should the child be called? A consultation of

neighbors and friends was held; many were the names suggested by one and another, but the choice fell upon Samuel Meshach. The first, as an indication that he would be an offering to the Lord; the last, that he had passed through fire unharmed.

Preparations were speedily made at No. 10 for the christening. Her best cap was bleached, ironed and goffered as it had never been done before. Her best black gown, worn only on great occasions, was brushed, sponged and retrimmed; a large cake was baked and lettered with icing, "S. M. T." The ceremony was delayed in view of the possibility that some relative might appear and claim the child, and in order to avoid the appearance of undue haste. Still she felt the need of the baptismal consecration, and would often say, "Suppose he should die, how do I know but that his parents were wicked people, and never had him baptized? Susan Thump can never neglect her duty."

The man of God, in apostolic robes, stood in the best room, with a bowl of water before him, clear as crystal. As he looked into it he said, "May this be an emblem of thy life, little stranger; thou hast been saved by, and from fire; may the waters never overwhelm thee, but as clear and pure as these drops, may thy soul be found. Who will be sponser for this child?" A voice loud and firm, from a little body in Sunday clothes, answered: "I, Susan Thump."

After the usual form on these occasions, the congratulations and good wishes offered, cake and coffee were brought forth. She intended by precept and example to be a bright and shining light to Samuel, and no strong drink should be brought into his presence by her. The Rev. Peerei craved a blessing upon the refreshments, and, also, upon her who had taken upon herself the name and responsibility of mother. The cake was eaten and the coffee drank; Susan had adopted the child, the Lane had adopted it, and, let us hope, Heaven had adopted it also.

He had received some injuries. from which he was fast recovering. At times, he seemed to recall the past. One day he opened his large gray eyes, and said,

"Mamma." Was it a vision of his own lost mother, or did he comprehend that the little woman, who was so attentive to his every want, who watched over him awake and asleep, who had rescued him from death, was now his mother?

The boy Samuel grew in stature, and in favor with all the boys in the Lane. The mothers looked upon him with tenderness; their eyes often filled with tears when they thought "it might have been my Johnny, or my Tom, left to the mercy of strangers." Then they rejoiced that the little fellow had fallen into such good hands as those of Susan Thump.

Years rolled on, carrying with them babies into childhood, from childhood into youth, and from youth into manhood. Samuel Meshach Thump, like other boys, was carried into a large-sized youth; no relatives nor friends had given heed to the notice, and Susan looked upon him as the staff and stay of her declining years, in case she made up her mind to decline. He loved her; she was, of course, his only friend. He had no recollections that would give trace to his parentage. The sight of a burning building would send a horror to his heart; he shrank from running to fires, as is the habit of boys; he had been told of his hair-breadth escape, and why his name was S. M. Thump, which did not, in the least, lessen his love for mother Susan. She petted, indulged and protected him as her own.

As time wore on, and the youth was fast becoming a man, many were the consultations held between mother and son, concerning education and business. "What have you determined upon?" said she, when she felt the question must finally be decided.

Samuel was indifferent; he seemed unwilling to leave home and embark on a voyage of responsibility. The business of a tradesman, a mechanic, the profession of a lawyer, or orders for the church, were before him. The last he shrank from, as giving him a position that would place the souls of men in his power. The creeds and forms of the church were not entirely satisfactory to him, but the law and command of Christ "to love the Lord with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself, were, to

him, plain and binding, and that only was he willing to preach and teach, for it belonged to the whole human family. She was a little disappointed that he refused the church. She had often thought of the pride she would feel to sit under the preaching of the Rev. S. M. Thump, D.D., and ask, "How did you like my son's sermon to-day?"

It was finally decided that he should try the law, and articles of indenture as a lawyer's clerk, were drawn up, and S. M. Thump entered the office of S. S. Trout.

Years still rolled on. The day-dawn of Susan's hopes one morning ended in full fruition. The Daily Bee and other papers announced the fact that—

"Partnership was this day entered into between S. S. Trout and S. M. Thump. From this date the business will be conducted under the name of Trout & Thump."

Another important milestone in her life had been reached. She read and re-read, cut out and pasted in her Bible another notice that she wanted read after she was dead and gone.

She walked up and down the Lane, to read the modest sign, fresh from the hand of the painter, glistening like letters of gold, amid many others at the entrance. She saw none but this, and thought no one else could; the others looked dull and weather-beaten, and so did the other firms in her eyes, and she was sure they must in those seeking legal advice. Her thoughts wandered back to the night, when she saw a helpless child surrounded by flames; the rescue, and the nourishing, the anxiety, and the joy at the announcement of the doctor that he would live; the cake, the coffee, the goffered cap, and the words of the Rev. Peerie, saying, "Samuel Meschach Thump I baptize thee?"

Another cake was baked, larger and richer, bearing the names Trout and Thump, in extra-sized letters. The smoking coffee sent forth the flavor of the best mocha, the cream was the thickest and sweetest the alderney could give. A new cap had been ordered, with the request that it should be in the latest style, and trimmed in the most becoming manner. The frock to be worn, was one Samuel had given her, bought with his first earnings. The

reverend gentleman stood again in the same neat little room, craving a blessing on cake, coffee, Susan, and the firm of—Trout & Thump.

CHAPTER IV.

JOE UPON THE ROAD TO BUSINESS, FAME AND FORTUNE.

"SIT ye down; the stars tell no secrets, and the moon never listens in her journeyings. I am a traveller, but not a wanderer; I have a work before me, but I am not an adventurer. Over there"—and the speaker pointed to the village on whose outskirts he and his companion had met,—"over there, at the Wayfarer's Rest, I heard them talk of honest Joe.

"An honest man I have sought for a long time. Have I indeed found one?" This question the man seemed addressing to himself, for his look was not one of query, but astonishment—almost awe—as if an honest man were a rare sight to him.

"Yes," was the modest reply, "I am so called."

"An honest man you are, and yet you seek business, fame and fortune."

The other started, and in surprise looked up, saying, "Pray, how know you?"

"Ha! the birds bring me messages, and secret thoughts the rustling leaves, but the business must come first, and upon its success depend the fame and fortune. I am about to engage in an undertaking that requires a diversity of talent; but first I look for honesty—you have that, now for the talent—first, a keen scent, that is the hound; second, fleet and surefooted, that is the horse; third, firmness and fearlessness, never losing sight of the game, that is the hunter. Can you be hound, horse or hunter as occasion may require? Can you obey my commands without questioning my motives, so long as you

will never be called upon to cast a shadow upon the name you have so long borne—'Honest Joe?'"

"I consent," said Joe, "and will serve you faithfully."

"You consent! that is not binding."

"Then, I agree."

"Not enough; swear by the heavens above, the earth beneath, and the rippling waters under us, and I shall be content."

"Then, I swear it, Mister—what may I call you?"

"Wallace will do," and a nestling beside him startled Joe, and caused Mr. Wallace to whistle, and forth stepped a dog.

"Here is my companion—my best friend. He will always be with us, and as he knows my business thoroughly, you need not fear to say anything before him. Step out, old fellow." The dog came forth, and gazed at an honest man with quite as much curiosity as his master had done a few moments before. Having satisfied himself, by the close application of his nose to the honest man, that he was not a wraith, he looked back at his master, as much as to say, "He will do. I highly approve of the companionship, of this honest man."

"My dog likes you, I see; a good recommendation for you. He reads character well," said Mr. Wallace, pleased that his best friend approved of his choice. "Do you desire to return to the village? If not, let us begin our journey at once. I must be in London as soon as I can; my sole purpose in coming here was to find you, and now let the allied forces return to battle."

"I am ready to start at once," said Joe.

The moon, who had hidden herself partially behind a cloud during this interview, now came boldly forth, contrary to Mr. Wallace's declaration. She *had* listened in her journeyings, and as she peeped into the heart of each, and listened to their contract, she shall tell us what she saw—we know what she heard.

"I saw a man tall, angular, but well shapen—for the angles had been rounded—with keen gray eyes which could beam with love, tenderness and pity, or could look determination and firmness; his nose was long and

straight, the nostrils well cut, his mouth had given scornful curves to its sides, which were not natural. In short, I liked him, and having often peeped at him before, can say naught against. And I also saw a man short in stature, shoulders a little bent, but head always erect, with heart a little bent by life's burdens, but never beating to a mean action, and well deserving his name 'Honest Joe.' I shone on them my mildest beams. I guarded them while they slept, I lighted them, when they travelled. Let me see, I was below zenith, so when they tired I saw them asleep, and left word with the stars, for the sun to look well to them, when he came."

After journeying awhile, the little party grew weary, looked about for a resting place; no house in sight, so they turned from the king's highway, into a small grove, and there found moss for a bed, and stones for a pillow.

Mr. Wallace, well pleased with his night's success—for Joe was what he had long needed—fell off to sleep without meditations; but Joe wooed sleep for a long time in vain, and, of course, must think, and he thought, "Have I been rash? Perhaps so, but no one can suffer by it. My home one of want and penury, my friends few and distant, my station low and humble. What lost, if nothing gained? I like him;" and having nothing more to think especially about, he attended more particularly to the wooing of the aforesaid god, and at last fell asleep.

The next morning the dog was early astir, and awakened his master and Joe. Mr. Wallace opened a provision bag, spread its contents on the grass, and invited Joe and the dog to draw near, saying, "My dog always shares my food. I never make any distinction when we travel."

They all ate with relish, and till hunger was satisfied. Mr. Wallace gathered the remnants, put them in the bag, and cutting a stick from a tree near by handed it to Joe. "Perhaps," said he, "you are not so well used to travel as I, and a staff might help you."

Joe took the stick, thanking him; the dog ran about smelling the footsteps of the night before, his master shouldered the bag, and the start to business, fame and fortune began. They travelled leisurely on till nearly

noon, when they reached a small village, at whose only inn Mr. Wallace proposed to stop. They entered, sat down; the dog seemed at home, so did his master.

"Long seems the time, mister, since ye spent a ha'-penny at our board," said the landlady.

"True, my good woman. Now bring us some bread, meat and beer, plenty for three."

"Glad ye didn't take the other road, this time, mister. They do say highwaymen have been seen there, so my good man don't go that way to town now," said the loquacious hostess, as she laid the cloth and prepared the table.

"What mean you? Do you say that your man, Tim Catharty, hasn't courage enough to travel the shorter road to the town?"

"D'ye think my man wants a bullet through his heart or his head smashed? Ye can try it; if killed, no wife and boy Johnny will cry for bread."

"Now, give yourself no trouble, woman; your Tim, will never be molested. Bring us a good hearty meal, we have a journey before us, but will leave all fears behind. Add to our bread and meat something else nourishing, we need strength."

"I have a pot of soup that will nourish."

"Yes, but if like some I have found in my travels, it wouldn't have strength enough in itself to run down hill."

The three drew close to the little table, and the dog, with an appetite as sharp as his two companions, sat erect on haunches watching Tim's wife as she prepared the "hearty meal."

"Don't forget my dog, woman; he must have the same as myself, barrin' the beer."

The two men ate in silence until hunger was appeased.

"Now Joe," said Mr. Wallace, "for a purpose which you shall know in time, I shall not see you till we meet in London—or rather just out of it—you are to take the road to the right. You will first come to Pascal, but that is many miles from here; if you do not travel fast, as you probably will not, you must rest to-night at some other than a public house. From Pascal, which you will reach to-morrow, you will turn to the left, and on to the All

Welcome: there, if you will mention my name, the host of that good inn will do all for your comfort. I think you will reach that to-morrow night, and the next day take road direct to Jericho, the sign of whose inn reads, 'This is Jericho. Travellers stop and be refreshed. There I will meet you, and here is money for your journey." And slipping a five pound note in his hand, added, "Business will begin as soon as we reach London, and may fame and fortune soon be yours."

They shook hands heartily, the dog followed his master, and Joe followed the road to Pascal, hope and fear alternating at every step. The day passed with no stirring incident; the last rays of its declining sun seemed to say, "Good night, Joe; I shall be here in the morning in time to show you the way." Travelling on until overtaken by darkness, he saw a light glimmering in the distance, and wondered if he could find lodging there for the night. He quickened his steps, for his stomach said, "I have had nothing since you left the inn, eight hours ago, too long to leave me empty; no wonder I gnaw and groan." Feeling that complaint, his feet ventured to say, "We too, are weary; the stones have hurt us, hard boots have rubbed blisters; we need rest." The remainder of Joe joined issue, and he tapped gently at the door.

A voice of unusual sweetness bade, "Come in."

"A fine evening ma'm," said Joe, to a woman who appeared to be the mother of three children, the eldest, whom he at once recognized as the owner of the sweet voice, was perhaps thirteen, the next, a boy of ten, and another somewhere in babyhood. They all looked surprised; the children with their eyes intently fixed on the stranger, drew near the mother.

"My good woman," said Joe, "can you furnish me a lodging? I am not a beggar. I will pay for all I ask. I am weary, footsore and hungry; I have travelled some distance, without food or rest."

By this time the mother and children felt more at ease, as the stranger's voice and manner were gentle and kind.

"My accommodations, you see, are not very good," the woman replied.

"Never mind that, I will give you no trouble; give me a corner on the floor and a blanket, and I shall be more comfortable than I was last night."

The woman eyed him closely, then said, "You are welcome, stranger; my husband is away from home, he may also be hungry and tired. I would not want him turned away from anybody's door. Now, Susie," addressing herself to the eldest, "set out the supper, and cook a slice of bacon."

"Do you drink coffee, mister?"

"Yes."

The table was soon spread with the best the little house could supply, and they all sat down. The woman looked at Joe, as much as to say, "Why do you not say grace?" He was immovable in tongue as well as hands. After a moments pause, the mother thanked the Good Giver for food and raiment, then asked protection for the stranger on his journey. Joe was still silent.

"Now, help yourself: you are welcome to what we have. My man says, 'Always entertain strangers, they may be angels,' and so the good book reads."

Joe ate with a good appetite. He thought the flavor of the coffee the richest, the bread the sweetest he had ever tasted.

"Susie, fetch a cup of milk for the baby."

The little one raised its hands gladly, put the cup of milk to its lips, when a deathly pallor overspread its face; the rolling of the eyes and jerking of the limbs indicated one of those oft repeated attacks so much dreaded by the mother. She understood the symptoms, also the remedies —warm bath, mustard and onions, which restored the little one to consciousness for a short time. Again it was seized with convulsions, and when again relieved opened its large blue eyes, lisped "Mamma," and was with the angels.

"This," thought Joe, "is life; one day tenderly nursed in a mother's arms, the next in a winding sheet, but food for worms." His heart was moved, tears gushed from the strong man's eyes. He had never before witnessed a scene like this, never felt the veil so thin that mortals could almost penetrate it, never before realized that one step could take him into the Great Beyond.

Joe's hand dug the grave, the mother's prepared the little shroud, and without priest, or prayer, except "Thy will be done," from a breaking heart, the little form was laid in the garden, under the spreading branch of an old forest tree.

The third morning after his arrival, the stranger, who had proved an angel in the hour of need, bade adieu to Mrs. Blake and her two children with a heavy heart, and resumed his journey.

CHAPTER V.

THE LITTLE MAN ENTERTAINS GREAT HEART.

AFTER Joe had been an hour or more on his journey, Mr. Wallace engaged passage for himself and dog in the coach which would start for London at once, and bring them there in time for the next day's labors. The ride would cover most of the night, but if he could rest on turf and stone, he surely could on a comfortable seat within the coach. The dog and driver were old friends, for the master and he had often been passengers before, so he was made welcome on the box, and from his look of intelligence, one would say, he knew the most. The coach rattled and bounced, jolted and jostled, as any coach should, halted twice for fresh relays, and at last reached London at break of day. Mr. Wallace stepped out and the dog jumped down before they reached the Hand and Arm, to which the coach was destined, and hurried through a few by-streets which were sparsely populated, for they were on the outskirts of the great town, till Jericho's invitation to "stop and be refreshed" welcomed them both. The dog knew, as well as his master, that a good meal, and if they pleased, a soft bed, awaited.

The hostess of Jericho was a cheery little body, alive

to the comfort of all who came within her walls, for by so doing she was alive to her own welfare and prosperity. After lavings without, in the clearest and purest of water, sent up in the cleanest and whitest of pitchers, and laving within—for the foaming ale, for which Jericho was famed, would carry the dust and dryness from the throat of any traveller, and leave his palate clean and clear for the smoking breakfast that would follow, Mr. Wallace and his dog emerged from Jericho fresh and bright, just as the town was yawning, opening its windows, inhaling the dampest of fogs, and stretching its limbs for another day's labor.

They walked leisurely along, not caring to be there till the great town had eaten, and was finding its way to the shop and the office, the market and the quay. There was nothing to admire; indeed, if there had been, who could have seen it? for—it was foggy.

"I have given him a chance to leave my service should he regret his oath, for he has yet no clue to what his business will be. A walk alone for many hours I have found to be an excellent sedative to an excited brain. He boiled and bubbled with fancied prospects for a few hours—it was but natural—now let him alone, and when he reaches London, he will run clear and steady, the foam will have disappeared, then he will be ready for business. As it is early I may find our little friend at home. How would you like to keep dearie company, for a few hours, eh?" said Mr. Wallace to his companion, who shared his thoughts as well as his food. The dog did not return the heartiest kind of acquiescence to this questionable proposition, or rather propositional question, but assumed a martyr-like air, as if, "I will suffer for the cause, even so far as to be bored by the stupid company of dearie." So they turned off Friars way and turned into Mayfair, and soon saw, or rather felt that they would see, if they could, the Blue Bottle, with the ample red stopper.

Mr. Wallace knocked at the door of the third house in the court. The door was not at once opened—perhaps the knock was not heard, but there was a bustling within, as if the occupant were in a hurry. Another knock, another hurrying, and the key turned the bolt, the bit lifted the latch, the hinges turned the door, and the Little Man

in black turned himself out upon the threshold in such a hurry, that one would never suspect he had heard the knock.

"There is so much to do, and no"—

"Very true, my good friend, there is so much to do, that I find the days too short, like yourself."

"Ha! ha!" said the Little Man, starting back as if he were greatly surprised to find anyone there. "Come in, come in; the fog is too thick to be in a hurry. Ha! ha! come to see dearie," and he patted the dog heartily. "Come in, come in, Great Heart and his dog are always welcome. We don't feel in a hurry when they come; do we, dearie?"

"Time's up, time's up!" cried a voice from within.

"Yes, your right, dearie, time is up for them to be out in the wet. They are coming. Here we are. How glad she is to see you."

Mr. Wallace and the dog were perfectly at home in the quaint little room; its curiosities were no curiosities to them, they had been there before, and would be many times again, and the last time would be when the Little Man would be in no hurry; the hinges would work so silently, the door open so softly—but we must not anticipate. Mr. Wallace and the bird were surely the best of friends, for she cried, "I'm in a hurry, I'm in a hurry!" and flew down upon his shoulder.

"Yes, you are in a hurry for the grains I promised you. Here they are fresh from the country. What say you first?" The bird whistled her thanks, at the same time looking sharply at the closed hand.

"That was well done, pretty starling, and here is your reward."

The bird took a few kernels from his hand, and then he placed the box which held them upon the top of the case, and turned to the Little Man saying, "As you are in no hurry we will talk awhile, and when we leave I will let my dog remain here with dearie for a few hours, if you are willing?"

"Great Heart knows I am always ready to serve him," replied the Little Man, "for where should I be if it were not for Great Heart?"

"Never mind that," said Mr. Wallace, "you can do more for me than I have ever done for you—that is, if you have the chance. No, I do not believe in chance. Nothing happens by chance. There is a power controlling every act, and some day, we shall be a power controlling the acts of others."

"Then I beg the power to bring somebody right in here," and he opened the velvet sack, which he had taken from his shoulders when he re-entered the room. "I'd pitch him into it, and I'd sew it, and tie it, and seal it so he couldn't get out; and I'd say it was my pin-cushion, and I'd use so many pins and needles, I'd sew and pin, and pin and sew, till he'd think of the pins and needles he has put in people's hearts. I'd never be in a hurry to make the gatherings then, only the gatherings of pins and needles. "Ha! ha! can the power do that?" chuckled he, in almost fiendish delight, rocking himself to and fro, till at last he jumped up, suddenly struck out his hands, and so rapid were the somersaults, it was hard to tell whether it were not just as convenient for him to be upon his head as his feet.

His visitor sat quietly awaiting for the "straightening up," which he knew would come in its time, although it was a little longer than usual in its coming; the evolutions increased till, exhausted, he cried, "I'm straight now," and stood up.

"Sit down, then, and let us talk," said Mr. Wallace, drawing the large chair from the corner. The Little Man drew up the faded piece of penitence—the *prie dieu*—sat at his feet, and placing his elbows on his knees, his chin on his hands, and his eyes on the face of his guest, said, "I'm not in a hurry, the fog is too thick; the gatherings must now be pins and needles for the big cushion. Ha! ha! ha, the devil can have him when I get through with him, but he mustn't hurry me."

Mr. Wallace did not heed, but said quietly, "I have a friend who will aid me; he is honest, faithful, and trusty. He must have a place which will overlook No. 40 Chapel Street. I have come to you to find such lodgings for him. Can you?"

"Can I? can I?" replied the Little Man. "I'm in a

hurry now; I'm in a hurry to see Mistress Boggs; not Boggs, but Mistress Boggs. Boggs would never do. Can I? can I? Ask me, Great Heart, what I cannot do for you."

"Have you found any papers, scraps, or anything, since I saw you last?"

"Not a word till yesterday, then the gatherings gave me this card," and he handed Ralph Speeder's card to his visitor, who read it, re-read it, rubbed his eyes and read again.

"The gatherings did well for"—

"The power, you mean," interrupted the Little Man, "put it into the gatherings," and he told him of his interview with the young man who bore the name, and whose coat contained the card.

"This is of use to me, but for safer keeping I will leave it with you," returned Mr. Wallace, handing it back and then withdrawing it read again, "Ralph Speeder," as if he would reassure himself.

"And it will be safely kept, Great Heart."

"Yes, I am sure of that, or I would take it myself. Let me see the coat."

"Here it is," said the Little Man, opening the drawer of a quaint piece of furniture, which was in part a wardrobe, a dressing-table, and a secretary, a feature of each, with neither predominating. The lower part held a large deep drawer, just the thing to hold the gatherings feminine; the next story held a secret drawer, where all the important papers of the owner were kept; and the top held brush, comb, a variety of pin-cushions, a vase or two, and many bottles of divers make up and color. Some with meager contents, and others with no contents visible, but a delightful odor still clinging to them telling of what had once been within. The coat was brought forth from the ample drawer, and closely examined by Mr. Wallace; finding nothing he returned it, thanking the Little Man for his trouble, who replied with a satisfied air, "I'm never in a hurry when I examine the gatherings, and there's not a thread I don't see."

"I did not expect to find anything after you had searched it, but there is a subtle something which the

wearer imparts to a garment, which I can feel enter my finger tips, when I touch it, which puts me on his track," was the reply.

"The something my finger tips like to feel is the man himself, if I don't like him," said the Little Man, with a merry "ha! ha! I dont know anything about your subtle things."

"The fog is breaking," said Mr. Wallace, as he looked toward the window, knowing it would be useless to explain what he knew to be a truth with himself—he could not speak for others. "I will now leave my dog, and will call again in a few hours."

The dog had lain down before the hearth; he was a weary brute, and why not? he had not the incentive that possessed his master, to take no time for rest. The starling piped out, "Time's up! time's up!" The dog supposed the time was up for sleeping, the master knew the time was up for his tarry in Blue Bottle Court; the starling meant the time was up which she had spent in eating the luscious grains—with the Little Man in Black, time was always up: so the time being generally up, they were all up, Mr. Wallace and the Little Man to go; the dog and the starling to stay.

"How shall I let you know if Mistress Boggs will accommodate our friend?" asked the Little Man, as they were parting at the corner under the Blue Bottle with the red stopper.

"Leave word with the blind man whom you will see at the corner of Lunley and the Wilton," replied Mr. Wallace, and each seemed to the other to suddenly disappear, for the fog was only ruffling its edges, and clearing in patches. The Little Man with his bag on his shoulders hopped and skipped till he skipped into Cross-Cut Lane —so named because it ran diagonally, and made a long way into a short way. He knew every inch of the ground, and could walk there blindfolded, if need be, so he would have known exactly where to stop, if he had not heard a familiar voice crying, "It's a lie, it wont cure! It's a lie! it won't cure!"

"It will kill, though, won't it? ha! ha!" asked he, of the owner of the voice, who recognizing her questioner,

replied rather sharply, but appropriately, "Hurry! hurry!" "Yes, I will hurry," said the Little Man, "but I must see your mistress first."

"Come in! come in!" continued the voice. "Cheap, cheap."

The Little Man laid his thumb on the latch-tongue, and entered the shop of "Boggs & Co." Now, just whom "Co." represented was not known. Mistress Boggs was the Boggs referred to, and Mistress Boggs was the all—Boggs, we will call a silent partner—poor fellow, he dared not be anything but silent. Occasionally he had ventured an opinion, but it was always when in the presence of company, who he hoped would prove a screen for him, but he had found Mistress Boggs' "Hiram, I hear a cat in the area," or "Hiram, dear, the shop; if it is a customer, come and tell me," quite as annihilating as her "Boggs, why don't you hold your tongue? don't you know that you don't know anything?" a form of speech he always got when they were alone—so it had been some years since Hiram Boggs had expressed his mind on any subject, however trivial, in the presence of his better half, or within her hearing.

The room, which the Little Man entered, was full—so full, that when one got in, he wondered if he could ever get out—the way seemed to close behind him. There were things new and things old; things useful and things that it was a query if they could ever be used; the known and the unknown, the handy and the unhandy, and at the first glance, one would say, piled up with no reference to article or order. But ask Mistress Boggs for anything, and her quick brain classified it at once as belonging to household, medicinal, ornamental or literary. Having thus classified, she would proceed direct to the shelf, box or corner, and lo! it would be there. A prominent feature of the shop window's display was a collection of bottles labelled, "The Never Fail, Boggs & Co., sole agents," and, if the truth were told, might be added, sole purchasers also. She had bought them years before, and they had withstood well the ravages of time; when the dust began to obscure their list of cures and directions for use, they were removed one by one, freshened and

replaced, to look boldly and impudently in the face of the passer-by, and make believe they were new recruits come to take the places of the veterans in the great and glorious work allotted to the "Never Fail." When the shop door tingled, Hiram peeped in to see who the new comer was. If Mistress Boggs were engaged elsewhere in the house, and if the outlook for a sale was propitious, he disappeared, and she appeared.

Thus was it with the interior.

Painted upon a long sign without, was the following unique versification, by the head of the firm, "Boggs & Co. Dealers in everything new and second hand.

Drop in my friend
A ha'pence spend
Just take a look
In every nook."

Above the shop window, when the weather would permit, hung a parrot, and her voice it was who called to the Little Man. She had been taught—or rather, the attempt had been made to teach her—to cry the praises of the "Never Fail," but as she would add her own opinion, which, was "It's a lie! It won't cure!" the attempt had been abandoned, and few knew what she meant when she thus cried out. Her mistress did not begrudge her the food she required, for it was her belief that she drew them custom, otherwise Poll would never have enjoyed the publicity she did, for everything with Mistress Boggs must be turned into a penny or its equivalent.

Poverty was her constant plea. Six days she labored to lay up for moth and thief, on the seventh all about her rested; and she rested also, and when the hour for service came she turned the key on the lock, and it's click said while Boggs was a step or two in the rear, "This day they turn their faces Zionward, and the shop is closed, the parrot silent, while they look to the investments for their soul's eternal welfare, that when they shall be called upon suddenly for an inventory, they may not be found wanting in stock."

Mistress Boggs was a wizzen little woman with small,

sharp eyes and a nose which, as the parrot was her senior, no doubt was a facsimile of its nose.

She had a limp on the right side, and as she never appeared on the street, except on Sunday, this was discernible on no other day, for the shop was so small, and so well filled, that each step was necessarily finished before she got to the limp. No offspring blessed the union of the Boggses, yet her heart always turned warmly toward children, and if his did, he did not dare let it be known. She was naturally kind and meant ill to no one except Boggs, and to him only, because he did not at the outset of their married life assert his own rights, so it had become a second nature to her to make him submissive, and then despise him for it. Her leanness was caused more by constant toil than any viciousness of nature. Her acquaintance with the Little Man had been limited to business interests only. She took his "gatherings," as he called them, and in a very private way supplied many mantua-makers with robes, which when remodelled, retrimmed, touched here and there, were sold to the uninitiated at as good a price as new, and oftentimes as "made to order." Gentlemen's apparel went to the tailor, the haberdasher and the boot-maker—but out of these she always reserved what she could sell at a better price in her own shop, or use upon her own person, occasionally presenting Boggs with what did not, nor would not, fit anyone else, or him either.

Thus it was on Sunday that Mistress Boggs could outshine all the residents of Cross-Cut Lane.

On this particular morning, she was no little surprised to see the Little Man in black without his gatherings, and at once scented something new.

"Good morning, Mr. Harold; walk in," said she, and he followed her into the room adjoining the shop, for their business was conducted in private.

"Good morning, good morning, Mistress Boggs—no gatherings, you see, to-day. Had some—yes, had some, but left 'em at home, in a hurry for other matters," replied Mr. Harold.

"Yes, you are always in a hurry—Boggs, the shop-bell." Boggs arose, and the door closed meekly upon him.

"It isn't a secret I am going to tell you. Mr. Boggs needn't go, he needn't go."

"Perhaps not, but it is just as well; the shop needs looking after."

"Well, well," said Mr. Harold, somewhat impatiently. He never could help poor Boggs, for his wife was always so cool, and met his attempts in such a no-consequence sort of way. "There's no time to lose; can you take a lodger, a quiet man, who is not like me, always in a hurry? He will not have much to do, and plenty of time to do it. He will pay before it is due, any price. He is honest and good. Don't ask him any questions. Mind your business and he'll mind his, and put many a shilling in your pocket."

Mistress Boggs involuntarily put her hand to her pocket, almost felt the shillings, and said, "I'll take him at ten shillings. When will he come?"

"Can't say exactly; maybe to-morrow, maybe next day. Give him a good bed, for he'll have plenty of time to rest. He'll pay when he comes. I'll be here by and by, with the gatherings. Good by, good by; you see Boggs needn't a' gone out. I'm in a hurry now. This is done now; we'll hurry and see what comes to be done next. Good by, good by."

CHAPTER VI.

MR. TROUT RECEIVES AN OLD FRIEND AND POOR FELLOW.

As Mr. Thump entered his office that morning, he saw through the glass door of Mr. Trout's private room, a gentleman in close conversation with him. The interview was long, and Mr. Trout seemed in no hurry for his departure, although Mr. Thump was, for a case of much importance was at present requiring the combined attention of the attorneys. He waited till the time grew so brief before he must appear for their client, that he could count it by minutes, and began pacing the outer office.

The conversation of Mr. Trout and his visitor he could not help hearing, now and then—not enough to gain much information, but sufficient to excite curiosity. His confidence in his partner's integrity was not of the firmest. He would nibble any bait so long as the hook was silvered, and trusted to the future for quieting his conscience. He said to himself, "If I do not do this, some other will, and I will spend my old age in making amends."

Perhaps he had visions of spending ill-gotten wealth upon the endowment of some institution caring for those same unfortunate beings whom he had crushed in spirit, broken in heart and ruined in pocket. There are such charitable men, noble hearted counsellors, who would counsel a man into a living tomb, and then leave their wealth to gild it.

But we are not certain that Mr. Trout's conscience possessed sufficient quickening power to trouble him much, when he should grow old, and retire from the profession's active duties, and open his eyes every morning upon resolutions elegantly framed and hung upon his wall, expressing the sincere regrets of honorable members of the bar, that so sagacious, so learned, so honest, and so upright a man had stepped off the stage. But we are looking to Mr. Trout's possible future, and not dealing with the present as we should.

Mr. Wallace, for he was the visitor, at last withdrew, evidently to the senior member's unwillingness, and to the junior member's relief. Mr. Trout had seen his partner's uneasiness, and grew himself uneasy lest he might overhear what he did not want him to know, so he came directly out behind Mr. Wallace, who passed Mr. Thump, with a pleasant "good morning, sir," and when the outer door closed, said in a low apologetic tone, lest he too might be overheard by his departing visitor, "An old friend, Mr. Thump—many years since we have met, and talking of the past made me forget the duties of the present."

"With all due respect, Mr. Trout, I would say, that business, especially that of such importance as the present case, should not be sacrificed to the pleasure of friendship," said Mr. Thump with dignity.

"True, true, my good Samuel, how like mother Susan," and the smile was so bland that it threatened to do serious injury to the certain facial muscles that made the smile. The truth was, that the senior member regarded the good opinion of the junior member as worthy of keeping. The sneak and the coward always admires the frank and the brave. "Now let us to business at once."

Papers were hurriedly looked over, and consultations made not at all satisfactory to Mr. Thump, but quite so to Mr. Trout, for he had visions of boundless wealth acquired by a little strategy, which was only one of the requisites to every one in his profession. No one would be cheated, and he would be paid for life—no plans were laid but he saw the result of them, and was not that enough to make him smile?

"You must represent the firm at opening of court, and I will follow as soon as possible. Detained by business of importance—quite unexpected—you know how to arrange matters with our client," said he.

So Mr. Thump bore away the papers in his hand, an idea in his head, and a suspicion in his heart. The papers he made immediate use of, but the idea and the suspicion, required time to develop, and circumstances to bring to light, so we will patiently wait for such, since we know that Samuel Meshach was not so stupid as to believe all Mr. Trout had said.

Mr. Wallace returned to Blue Bottle Court, found the door unlocked—there was no need of key where the dog was—made some additions to his toilet, gave the starling a few dainty crumbs, adjusted the lock so that it would fasten when the door was shut, and turned toward Lunley Lane and the Wilton, where the blind man and his dog Rover were soon found.

Mr. Trout meantime looked out of the window, looked over some document and looked at his watch.

"A little strange," said he to himself, "that this gentleman should call at the very hour I was to receive Mr. Marplot, and about the very same estate. Do I like this Marplot? No, for he is a knave, and not a sharp one, either. I like to see shrewdness in a client, as well as his attorney," and he looked into a small mirror which

hung opposite, as if he expected to find shrewdness therein reflected—and perhaps he did, in his own estimation. "Do I like this Wallace? No, for he is too honest for my purpose; but sometimes honesty is credulous enough for a tool. I will try him."

His soliloquy was interrupted by the clerk announcing, "A gentleman upon important business, sir."

"Show him in, show him in," said Mr. Trout, the *lawyer*, and the gentleman was shown in to Mr. Trout, the *man*.

"Good morning, sir, glad to see you, though you are a little late; but delays cannot always be prevented," said the attorney extending his hand.

The hand that met his was shaky, and felt as if it were the wrong side of a pin-cushion, and after touching it one involuntarily withdrew under the impression he had taken a most unpleasant electric shock. The face was cleanly shaven and very shiny, the sebaceous glands were never idle, for he was always wiping his face and neck with his handkerchief. When he was a little excited these glands grew excited also, and poured forth their secretions faster than he could mop them up. His hair was straight, rather long and brushed back so smoothly that not one hair would dare rise alone, for all were oiled together; his forehead was high, but knobby like an imperfect stick—and the knobs would have puzzled the deft fingers of the manipulator of abnormal outgrowths of the brain. His eyes were never the same in expression, ever dancing from one object to another, but never looking anyone else in the eye. His clothes were rusty, bore traces of recent travel, and of poverty for a long time. His hat was tall like himself, and not freshly ironed. He had a sidling gait, and in this manner entered the room.

"Good morning," said he, giving the attorney an electric shock, and sidling into a chair. "Yes, I am late, but I'm always afraid I shall meet *him*. He has caught me, you know, and he will again, if he can. I saw a man come in here, so I stayed out. It is just as well to run no risk. How I hate him," and the glands filled, and overflowed so rapidly, that he had to mop fast.

"Did you see the man that came in?" asked the

attorney. "You need not fear him, if you ever see him here again. He would do no one any harm."

"You can't tell when they are going to harm; I am always on the lookout for *him*. He has been gone from London a long time, I hear. He always takes long journeys but this one has been for several years," said Marplot.

"Perhaps he is dead," suggested Trout in a soothing sort of way.

"No, he's not. He's one of the kind who will never die till all the rest are dead; he'll attend everybody's funeral but his own. I know him well," and he sidled about in a frightened way, when the outer door suddenly opened and Mr. Thump entered, to the complete discomfiture of the senior partner. To be found in his private office with another stranger, and not explain the reason, would hardly do, but he tried to look unconcerned, and trust to his wit to help him make a plausible statement. As Marplot saw nothing to fear in the new comer, he continued, after a vigorous application of his handkerchief, "If this matter can be settled before he gets back to London, I shall never be seen in these parts again. The father is dead beyond a doubt. Look at this, and you will see why I came this morning."

He drew from his pocket a copy of a daily paper, several years old, and pointed to a paragraph in the "Foreign News." Mr. Trout took it eagerly, and read among the list of officers stricken by an epidemic in India, the name of Col. Ray, and further down the column a brief sketch of his life, a eulogy upon his bravery, uprightness, and above all his consideration and kindness for all under his command.

"Very good," said the attorney, "that will be as good a witness as we need—from it we can get the official record. Now I must look to the remaining heirs myself."

Marplot started, and in surprised tones said, "Why must you? I tell you the truth. There is but one, and she is in this town. I said there is but one—no, she is not the heir, she must not be. Don't you see how unfair t'would be? The other estate is enough for her, for I am a poor devil."

"Yes, and would be a devil if rich," interrupted the lawyer, laughingly. "You know, Marplot, you are no stranger to me. How many times I've kept you from sinking."

"I've given up that habit long ago. Now I want to look out for myself when I'm old, and as I said, I'm a poor devil, and if I get this the public will be that much better off, for it won't have me to take care of." This forcible argument started the glands into renewed action, and of course brought the handkerchief into requisition again.

"Then you look at it in the light of a public benefaction, do you?" laughed Mr. Trout, "and want me to do the same."

"Yes, that is just it," replied the client smiling feebly, "and we'll always see it that way. I knew she would come when she was old enough—that is, come with your help," and he wiped rapidly, as he made an effort to strengthen the smile. "Ha! that was a master-stroke I made then—a long look ahead too."

With this recollection, Marplot showed for the moment some of the spirit that had been his in younger years. He had, by searching for heirs to unclaimed property, put the larger slice of many a fair fortune in his pocket—but the pocket's outlet he made believe greater than its inlet—the gambler's debts were always heavy.

"Are you sure she is here already?" asked Trout, with a quizzing look, as if he were examining a witness in court.

"Yes, Ralph came on the same vessel."

"Ralph—Ralph," said the lawyer, "a new friend—and who pray might he be?"

Marplot stammered, wiped away the perspiration rapidly, colored, slipped to the other side of his chair, and without looking up, was conscious of the lawyer's searching gaze, and finally said,

"Yes, the son of an old friend. He was left alone in the world, and for once I was charitable, and when I had means helped him, so now, he looks out for himself."

"It's all a lie," muttered Trout as he bent over some papers, "I know you to be a deceptive old fool, who can lay a plan well, but always tell something you've no busi-

ness to—just as you've done now—upset your own dish." But he looked up, and with his bland smile replied,

"Everybody has something good in him, but now, this man should help you in your need, if you did so to him. You are the worse for wear," and he looked at his own shining boots and clean broadcloth, and then at the worn shoes and rusty black of his client.

"He would, if I would accept it, but I have a little independence left and must do for myself, and if—"

"But how did he know the lady?" the lawyer interrupted, to lead him back to the object of most interest.

"He had heard me speak of her father, and so remembered the name—and mentioned it accidently," returned Marplot, still cringing under the lawyer's look. "Quite fortunate for me that he happened to mention it."

"Yes, quite," replied Trout, and to himself he added, "Ha! there again you've let yourself out. You've got an accomplice besides me, and you mean more mischief, than you let me know. I'll track you. I can plot, and you can plot, but you are well named a Mar-plot; you don't mar my plot though. I know a man who sees without eyes, and you will never mistrust him."

"Where is the lady?"

"At No. 40 Chapel Street."

"And how came you to know that?" It was the attorney's time to look surprised.

"All accident again; you see the fates favor me. She asked Ralph to call a cab, and he of course directed the driver where to leave her."

Marplot by this time was gaining more confidence in himself, for he believed he was duping his counsellor quite successfully. If there was any doubt, he was going to claim the benefit thereof, and went on still more assuredly.

"It is the first time in my life I was ever so fortunate as to have the desired information drop right into my hands. But now, let me see what is to be done. First, Mr. Trout, you want this paper, I suppose?"

"Well, yes, I will retain it for reference." But as he began to look as if the interview were getting to be a bore, Marplot taking the hint, arose, and bidding him "good

day," with the information that as they had not discussed a plan of proceeding, he might drop in any time, sidled out without giving the lawyer a shock, much to the latter's relief.

As the client walked out, he was sharply eyed by Mr. Thump, though unconsciously, for he was saying to himself, "There, I have let him know that I have means of finding out things without his help. He will be more careful how he manages. He is full of tricks."

As the counsellor turned to documents, whose examination the client had interrupted, he said to himself, "He has told too much. He would be a knave if he could be more discreet. He is crafty enough. He does not know that I summoned her to England, that I secured the lodging at No. 40. S. S. Trout is too deep for you, my man. But I must find another place for our interviews. Yes, this will not do, he must never come here again—I know where I can see him. That will disarm the suspicions of my honest partner. He thinks I am slippery. Well! well, some other would do it, if I did not. There will be plenty of time in the future to do good. When I am old I shall have nothing else to do."

With this consolation he met Mr. Thump, who informed him the case had been postponed, and he had hurried back to save him the walk.

"Thank you, thank you," said his partner, "I should have followed at once, but that poor fellow came in and detained me. I felt sorry for him, and so listened to his story. No case at all; particulars not worth repeating."

"Ah!" said Mr. Thump.

CHAPTER VII.

MRS. MUTTER, NO. 40 CHAPEL STREET.

A CAB stopped in a retired street, the light from its lamp shone upon the number forty.

"This is the 'ouse, ma'm." And the driver pulled the bell.

The call was answered by a boy, whose look of "What do y' want?" was answered by the cabman. "Call yer mistress; 'ere's a lady."

The mistress appeared, the cabby disappeared and the boy also, for the mistress had said, "Fetch in the lady and her luggage."

The cabby and the boy soon came to the surface, bearing the portable contents of the cab, which they deposited in the hall. The lady without the aid of either, but conducted by the mistress, deposited herself in the parlor. As she was doing this, Zeke—that was the boy—caught sight of her face. The box he was handling fell to the ground with such abruptness as to endanger its contents, provided they were breakable: at the same time his lower jaw dropped; but to this there was no danger, for its dropping was of too frequent occurrence.

"Je-ru-sa-lem! but she's pretty."

This exclamation was overheard by the landlady, who said sharply, "Zeke, where's your place, and where's your manners."

Zeke proceeded to carry the luggage up to the second floor, end room. Mrs. Mutter anxious to make amends for Zeke's audacity, and impress upon the new comer an idea of the remarkable facility with which she put all strangers at ease, and made them "feel perfectly at home" in her house, began at once, and might have continued to this day, had nothing switched her tongue on to another track, "'Ope you're well, Miss, and 'ad a good voyage; were you sick? 'Ad good company? it's dull being alone, and you're so young to come by yourself. Now, when I was young, girls always 'ad old folks with 'em. But you come from America; they don't think a girl needs protection there. Girls protect themselves, I hear. Well, dear me, it's the best way. Now look at me since dear Mr. Mutter passed away. He was a good man; I 'ave his picture. All the lodgers wish he was alive now, but I tell 'em if he was, that they wouldn't be under my roof. Mr. Mutter would never hear to such a thing. Then they don't know what to say, for they can't just say they are glad he is dead, out of respect to my feelings."

As this was said with no perceptible pause to take

breath, the lady knew the cessation must come sooner or later, and after one or two ineffectual attempts of "yes" or "no," as the question demanded, she resignedly listened and waited. To her infinite relief she changed the subject, but took no breath.

"You must be tired. I'll show you up, it's the second flight, end room—the only vacancy, Miss; lodgers speak for my apartments months a'ead. I wish Zeke and I 'ad kept count of 'ow many we've turned away who wanted this room. It's worrying, sometimes, to be so popular." Here she paused, and the new lodger thought, "And how much more worrying to be so voluble."

At the announcement, "I will show you up," the action suited the words, and by this time they were on the second flight, and in the end room. The exertion of ascending to the second floor had caused Mrs. Mutter to take breath at last, and the lady said, "You are kind and I—"

"No, no." By this time the lungs were freshly supplied, and she proceeded without pardon for interruption; indeed she never thought anyone could or cared to talk when she was about. "I'm not kind, only do my duty as 'ead of the family. Your room, Miss, looks hout on this court; but nice folks live there. You'll get the sun in the morning: now make yourself at 'ome; 'ere's water and 'ere's a towel, and if you want anything, tell Zeke; 'e's always around. Come down to supper when you're ready," and the door closed upon her, bringing relief from the incessant clatter, and quiet for the overwrought nerves.

The supper table brought little rest either to the nerves of the new lodger or the tongue of the landlady, and after a hasty meal the new comer retired.

At breakfast Mrs. Mutter's social nature had full play. If it had slumbered through the night—and it is to be hoped it had—it awoke in the morning fresh for action. The sun struggled, the fog struggled, and she struggled—the last the hardest—in endeavoring to convince Miss Ray that England was the greatest country on the globe.

"Look at our hinstitutions, look at our parks, at our lords and ladies, at our Tower and palaces," but she did

not say, look at our poor, who are made still poorer by the government. "Look at our harmy, and our navy and our good Queen's possessions, on which the sun never sets."

The sun made no reply to this, although his name was brought into question: he struggled on hoping to throw some light into the dark, narrow and dirty lanes that opened from Chapel Street, where the inmates of No. 40 dwelt. The lady ventured to remark that England's glories were no doubt many and great, when Mrs. Mutter, who had stopped to take breath and cut a small slice of bacon in proportion to the number of these inmates, continued, "But no one can ever know them unless they 'ave always lived here. I was born and bred on this very spot. Nobody can tell me hanything about this country. My father was a tradesman, kept shop on Cheap Side thirty years. As his daughter I hought to know the blessings I've inherited. Now, Miss Ray—I think that's your name?"

The lady bowed.

Mrs. Mutter says, "Might be I knew your mother when she was young."

If you did, thought the new lodger, it is more than I ever did.

"I was born and bred, as I said before, on this very spot, and I used to know a great many girls—"

"I think you could never have known my mother," ventured Miss Ray.

"Well, now it strikes me, and so hit did when you come last night, that I've seen somebody that looks just like you," continued Mrs. Mutter.

"Perhaps so," was the quiet reply. I hope no one is so unfortunate as to be like me, was the reservation.

Determined not to be baffled in the presence of so many the landlady resumed, "Ray, Ray; I once 'ad a cousin who married a man by that name."

"Indeed," was the surprised reply.

"Maybe related. Did your grandfather live on Regent Street?"

"My grandfather was not an Englishman," returned Miss Ray, more to stop Mrs. Mutter's tongue, than from

any possible knowledge whether she ever had a grandfather or not.

A pause here, which was an uncommon thing when the landlady was about, gave the new comer a chance to leave, which she did. Glad to be alone she looked out, or tried to look out, of the window in the end room, second floor, but the bricks were so near, the alley so narrow, the air so thick, and the glass so dirty, that she abandoned the effort and sat down. The landlady and some of the lodgers whose business did not hurry them from the table, remained to discuss who she was, and why she had come to England. Her room had been secured, and its price paid in advance, by the well known London solicitor, S. S. Trout.

Meanwhile the lady was querying over the same things, and had no more settled them to her own satisfaction, than had the lodgers below to theirs, when a knock at the door startled her, and before she could respond, the door flew open, a card entered and Zeke behind it. The card bore the name of S. S. Trout, the boy bore the message, "If Miss Ray is too tired, I'll come again."

"Are y' tired?" and he lingered to catch another look at the bright, pretty face before him.

"Say to the gentleman I will be down directly," and involuntarily she began to arrange a ribbon here, smooth a wrinkle there, put aside a stray lock, and take a peep into the little glass which did not reflect the sweet face as it should have done, but did the best it could. The fault was in the maker, and not in the good-will of the glass. However, Miss Ray had often seen herself under the most favorable conditions, and knew her nose was where it should be and her mouth not awry. She descended, wondering if her visitor were young or old, handsome or ugly, married or single; entered the parlor, and saw a man no longer young nor yet old; not handsome, and yet she had seen uglier faces; not married, but if fate and fortune, especially the latter, favored him, would not long be single.

CHAPTER VIII.

JOE APPEARS FOR BUSINESS—THE FAME AND FORTUNE HEREAFTER.

JOE had not kept faith with Mr. Wallace, for he was already due, and more than due at Jericho, but he could not leave Mrs. Blake until all had been done that lay in his power for her relief. We all feel, when death has touched a dear one, that what he leaves must be handled with sympathy and love. Joe possessed sympathy for the mother, and love for all children.

When he renewed the journey to Pascal his feet never loitered, and he made so good time that he reached there long before nightfall, and so was several miles on the next stage before he took lodging.

He enquired the distance to the All Welcome, hoping if up betimes the next morning he might be there to take breakfast with its hospitable keeper. But the sun not so weary with his day's journey, and having sought rest earlier, was up before him—and through the small curtainless window of the little inn peeped, shyly at first, and as Joe still slept, grew bolder and looked squarely into his eyes. This had the desired effect, and he bounded out upon the floor; hastily dressing, and hastily eating, his feet were soon on the way to where All were Welcome, but he in particular, when he mentioned the name of Mr. Wallace; from boots in the yard, to mine host at the bar, all did him honor. The latter would accept no compensation, and with a much lighter heart, fuller stomach and fleeter step, he, with plain directions, was on his way to Jericho, where he arrived just as Mr. Wallace and his dog were turning the nearest corner. Joe's manner was honest and frank, Mr. Wallace's questioning and surprised.

"You are late, but let me hear your reasons, friend; I never pre-judge. Come in first," and he led the way to where travellers who stopped were sure to be refreshed, called for supper to be served as soon as possible, and brushing the dust from his clothes, washing it from face and hands, Joe was ready to clear it from throat and stomach with the foaming ale Mr. Wallace had ordered.

The meal being finished, Joe said, "You began to think that I was false?"

"I had not quite made up my mind, Joe. I sent you on foot and alone, that you might have time for meditation and escape, if you were not satisfied with my terms; otherwise I should have brought you on the road with me," said Wallace; "and what venture or adventure has kept you?"

"Neither one nor the other to me," replied Joe. "I was with a little soul as it passed into eternity—as it took its venture into the other life;" and a tear fell into the foaming ale as he recounted the sad scene he had witnessed in the humble home of the Blake's.

Mr. Wallace listened in sympathy and self-interest—sympathy for the sorrowing mother, and self-interest in its thereby disclosing another trait in the character of Joe. He was, so far, satisfied.

"Now, Joe," resumed he, after the table was cleared and they were alone," business must begin in the morning. You will take lodgings in Cross-Cut Lane, at the second-hand shop of Boggs & Co. Very worthy people, you will no doubt find them, but your business is not with them, except so far as to pay them for what they give you, which you will do in advance; neither is their business with you except to give you what they agree to. Your room will overlook No. 40 Chapel Street, and you will note carefully the outgoers and incomers. You will particularly note one Trout, a solicitor of Lunley Lane; a man a little too broad for his length, encased in the shiniest of boots, and blackest of broadcloth; the whitest of linen, and wearing the blandest of smiles. His nose you will see a little before you see him, if the way is clear; if the way is not clear, it will be drawn in, and his face will have no outrider. Can you tell this man if you see him?"

Joe replied that without any doubt in his own mind he could.

"Very good," continued Mr. Wallace, "you will also especially note a man who wears the brownest of boots, the rustiest of black, and the shabbiest of hats, whose nose you will not be likely to see, for his head is never erect; his hand is always just putting into or taking from his

pocket a dirty handkerchief, which either a real or imaginary perspiration is constantly calling forth. He never takes a straightforward manly step either in acting or walking; he sidles into a mean action, and he has no other, and sneaks out of it, wiping off the meanness as it oozes through every pore; he sidles into a street, and he sneaks out of it. Would you know him?"

Joe again assured him of confidence in his ability to distinguish this individual from all others.

"So," Mr. Wallace went on, "you will note—but I forgot to say the owner of all this meanness and the dirty pocket-handkerchief is Marplot. If you should ever hear his name, you will know whom it means. You will note the young lady who occupies the end room on the second floor; your window will overlook hers. If she appears on the street, be on the street too, and give me the most accurate discription of her, and note where she goes. Always be attending to your own business apparently, but to theirs really. Never appear often enough to create suspicion; dishonesty is argus-eyed, remember, and we must work cautiously. Can you do what I require? If you need any guidance during the day, you will find a blind man at the corner of Lunley Lane and the Wilton, who will aid you; at night you will find me here." For the third time Joe expressed faith in himself, readiness to obey Mr. Wallace's commands, and being weary, retired.

The dog had heard his master, and the master now turned to the dog for his approval of the confidence he had given their new acquaintance; and after repeated scentings of the tracks Joe's soiled shoes had made upon the bare floor, he seemed satisfied, and laid his head on his master's knee, as if to say, "I smell no cause for alarm." Wallace patted him and said, "Let us go and see Dearie." The dog did not readily acquiesce—he did not think, evidently, that the society of Dearie compensated for the long walk to her residence,—but like the faithful dog he was, did not consider his feelings in the matter, and the two were soon on their way to Blue Bottle Court.

A rap on the door, a hurrying within, another rap and

more hurrying, when the Little Man in black drew back the bolt, and dressed as if for a journey of no short distance—for he carried a heavy walking stick, and over his shoulders had thrown a large cloak—stepped out suddenly, and would have stepped off as suddenly, had he not perceived who the visitors were.

"Ah! Great Heart, is it you? Come in, come! I find it always best to be going out in a hurry when there is a rap, and if I don't want to see the person who raps, why, of course he wouldn't stay when I am hurrying out. Ha! ha! this hurry that I am always in keeps me out of a world of trouble, and sometimes gets me into it, too. But if I know it in time, I hurry so that it can't overtake me;" and he turned back and led his guests into the room, where Dearie and all the curiosities were ready to receive them. The starling, with her "Time's up, time's up," was the first to receive attention from Mr. Wallace. That done to her satisfaction, or at least so near it as to keep her quiet for some time with her crumbs and grains, the visitor threw himself into the large chair, and passing his hand over his forehead said, "Isaac, if anything happens to me, you must finish my work."

The Little Man started so with surprise that he lost hold of the peg on which he was hanging his cloak, and it fell on him so completely, covering him in its ample folds, that he was some time finding his way out. And when he came to light he was dismayed to find the black silk cap which covered his head tightly, had not been so successful; and as he spied himself in the little glass opposite, the dismay turned to merriment, the merriment found vent in a few somersaults, the last one of which ended in plunging under the cloak with head as bare and shiny as an infant's, and emerging with the cap in place and the bareness and the brilliancy nowhere to be seen.

All this happened in such a twinkling that Mr. Wallace did not see the cause of the somersaults, and said, "Why, Isaac, you are merry to-night."

"No, no, it's the way I take my cloak off, Great Heart. I can't be merry when you are sad. Now tell me what the matter is, and we will see if we can't hurry over it, or hurry under, or hurry around—any way to keep trouble

out of our sack, and out of the gatherings." And so saying he drew up the old *prie dieu*, laid his arm across Wallace's knee, laid his chin on his arm and continued:

"Great Heart, nothing will happen to you—they tell me so, they come to me in my dreams; you know I always saw them, even when the days were so dark and I was in a hurry to get over there with them. They told me then I couldn't come, but I didn't believe them, and tried to go. They wouldn't let me, but brought you to me, and how you hurried trouble out of my sack. That sack was the heaviest I ever carried," and he spoke slowly, thoughtfully and sadly, as he recalled a bitter past.

He was silent for a moment, as if listening, and looking up brightly, continued, "Great Heart, you are all right, but what makes you feel the sack heavy is because they are all, every one, now in the Great Chimney. Ha! this chimney, how it puffs and smokes and groans with its foulness and its fogs! "How glad I am when the gatherings take me into the clean, green fields and pure air. I look back at the Great Chimney, and see its breath rising, ah! so black and dirty. I hurry out of it, and I hurry back into it—for there is so much to do, that I can't stay where the breath is clear. Ha! ha! how we all scramble in this Great Chimney. Those who are near the top are no better satisfied than those at the bottom. The lords and the ladies who can ride through its foulness and its fogs find no more rest than the poor bodies who are scrambling in the soot below. They all hurry after something—and most of them don't know what that is."

"You are right, Isaac, few have a purpose, perhaps. But now let us look at the papers. It is some time since I have seen them, and yet I know every word and line they contain. I am puzzled again. There is one at No. 40 Chapel Street; one who will claim, through Trout the lawyer—a wily adviser you know—the estate. I cannot make myself yet sure of her. At all events, whether she be true or false there is danger. The man for whom I wanted lodgings at Boggs & Co. is now ready for them. He will watch faithfully, I think. If he cannot succeed in giving me a perfect description of her, you might be able

to find some gatherings there, perhaps of no great value, for the lodgers are plain and the house unpretentious."

"The value is in what I gather for you, Great Heart, and not for the sack," said the Little Man, going to the secret drawer and taking therefrom a small box with a hidden fastening, which he handed to Mr. Wallace, who opened it and laid out a few papers neatly folded, and having a freshness about their creases which showed they had not long been on deposit. But these were not what he sought; they remained on his knee unnoticed, while his eyes rested upon something left within. The eyes filled, overflowed, and there were glistening drops on the something within which he took out almost reverently. It was a sheet of paper, well worn, but not by time so much as by tide. He read, re-read, and yet he knew long before all it contained.

He pressed his lips upon it, as if it were the forehead of the dead; he laid it down, as if he were laying a loved form in its coffin; he covered it with the other papers, as if he were strewing flowers before the earth should fall; he closed the box and handed it back to his friend, as the mourner turns away that he may not hear the cold clods' hollow sounds, as they strike the last covering of the mortal. He bowed his head, saying, "I came here wavering in faith, I go back full of courage. This paper always gives me new life."

"And makes you sad, Great Heart," said Isaac.

"Yes, but I should be sadder without it. I must go now. Meet Joe at the corner of Lunley and the Wilton, where the blind man stands, and introduce him to his new home, and to Mistress Boggs."

At mention of the blind man, the Little Man began his evolutions, and when they were finished, looked laughingly at Mr. Wallace, saying, "Will he be there?"

"I presume so," replied Wallace, "he seldom misses a day."

"Where will you be?" asked Isaac. Just then the starling cried, "Time's up! time's up!" which prevented a reply, and with a hearty good night and God bless you, master and dog turned towards Jericho.

CHAPTER IX.

FOUND, A BODY.

LONDON smoke, London fog, and London Bridge, all combined to conceal a boat whose crew consisted of a man and a boy, captain and mate, whose propelling powers consisted of a sail and four paddles, whose voyage without consistency was lighted by the stars' dull twinkle through the misty surroundings, and only traced by the plash, plash of the oars, and whose quiet was suddenly broken by—

"A little to the lee, Gaff, and spread your sail."

Gaff obeyed his father's orders, spread the sail, which filled with wind, and the little craft sped up the stream in spite of the opposing current. Gaff was first mate and all hands; the rudder and sail were subject to him. At a slight turn of the boat, he observed, or rather felt, a floating substance.

"Hullo, dad, 'ere's suthin in the water." The old skipper strained his eyes to see what the "suthin" was, as a dark object was being borne along by the tide.

"Take yer 'ook, boy, and try to ketch it."

Gaff again obeyed orders, steered the boat as near the object as possible, sent out the hook, and almost sent himself with it. His efforts were rewarded by finding the "suthin." It was a lifeless body. They drew it to, and into the boat, gazed upon it, or tried to, by the dim light of the stars. Gaff and the old man—for Gaff considered himself first in the matter—wondered what profit could be made out of this night's venture. Would there be a reward offered? had they better conceal the body a day or two to give an opportunity?

The sight, revolting to many, was so familiar to them that they shrank not from immediate contact. They examined minutely the clothing, and made a rough estimate of its value. Jewellery was searched for by the dim light of a lantern.

"'Ere's a good big ring," said Gaff, and wrenched it from the finger, which had already begun to swell.

They examined it carefully, and discovered that which required the combined education of the two to make out —"Henry to Maria."

With some distrust for the younger member of the firm, the senior partner drew forth a long leathern purse and dropped into it the sacred pledge, where were a few old coins, which he carried, he said, for "good luck."

The ring met the metal, and the metal gave forth a mournful clink, which seemed to say, "Why are you here, and where is your owner?" But the ring gave no response; it sank into the bottom of the purse, as its owner the day before silently sank into the bed of the river.

The body was pushed out, secured to the stern, and in time the boat rounded to shore under the cover of heaven's blue vault. The stars now shone clear and bright, the clouds and fog had dispersed. The gray dawn of day was scarcely perceptible in the eastern horizon when father and son anchored the boat, fastened the body by a rope tied about the waist to an old pile, gathered the paddles, the hook, the cords, the bits of driftwood, and a hat the tide bore to them; it might have been blown from a passing steamer, or it might have refused the watery grave its owner had sought, it mattered little to the skipper. They gathered the contents of the boat, which could be gathered by hands who did not own them, and stepped ashore.

"Snatcher can't keep a lookout on this: it be worth suthin I'm thinkin'," said Gaff, looking questioningly at the old man, "and I'm ready for a hot breakfast. I never draw'd one in afore but would come easy-like after you got a good hold on 'em, but she didn't want to come. I 'spose she didn't want to go," he added, as if the reason were a plausible one, and had suddenly occurred to him; and he turned and looked at the body as if for confirmation, when *it* turned too, and seizing the old man's arm in terror he pointed to it.

The latter—not easily frightened, and yet somewhat superstitious when he could not at a glance account for things out of the usual course—looked at Gaff, looked at the body, but did not look at the heavy swell made by a large boat going across the river, at some distance to

be sure. The tide and the swell were both going the same way, and tried to take the body too, but the rope and the pile made such resistance that they could do naught but turn it over and pass, and this they did as Gaff was reasoning.

"The poor thing is uneasy in this water, sure a nuff," said the old man, the bronzed face growing many shades whiter, "and what must she be in t'other!"

"At rest at last, let us hope, uncle," said a sweet voice at his side.

The old man still more startled, turned and replied, "Why, Meg, I wouldn't a been more surprised if she'd spoke herself. Now what brought ye 'ere? It's no time for you to be out. Why ye've been cryin', child; I can't 'ave that;" and the rough, hard hand smoothed back the short locks the wind had disarranged, and drew over the eyes the veil which was wound about the head, over which was drawn the hood to a long cloak. He did this as if to protect the face, but really to shut out the floating prize.

Too late! The girl tore off the veil, and pointing to the body—a sickening sight in the cold gray of the morning, as the rising tide swashed over it and sent it nearer to the piles, as if there were hope of rest upon land, but only to be borne back—"That is why I could not sleep, but must come here. Did *she* look like that? Don't take me away, I cannot go yet; no, I must look again—she is young, not much older than I. Why—why must such things be, uncle? I must have heard this same washing, washing of the water on that dreadful night, or else it would not sound so familiar, for I hear the water every night, but it never sounds like this. Has she too been wronged out of a happy life? If no one claims her, where will she be buried? Oh! this is awful. The hook did not hurt her, did it? I felt her in the water, and that was why I could not sleep, and why I cried," said Meg, now looking with a horrible fascination at the water, now covering her face with her hands as if to shut it out, now holding her hood closely over her ears. "The washing, washing, that is what I heard—like a hungry monster lapping its prey."

The old man had never seen the girl in such a mood

before, and was at a loss what to do. Gaff seldom ventured a suggestion on any subject when on land, so stood silently looking on, having forgotten his desire for a speedy breakfast. He was as fond of Meg as it was possible for him to be, but he always stood afar off, as if she were too sacred for him to approach. She had softened his manners, tempered his disposition, warmed his heart, taught him to read, and would have taught him to write, but as he insisted the latter should be done upon a rough board with a charred stick, his performances in that art were neither legible nor rapid.

Since she had come into his life, Gaff's mental horizon had been much extended, and he looked forward to being master of his own actions with broader views than one would think he could possibly expand to. All perplexities, of a mental, moral or spiritual nature, he always submitted to her, and then sometimes did as he pleased, but found whenever he did so, he landed on a barren shore; so that he had grown to be guided by her judgment. But here was a case in which she could not help him, so without endeavoring to help himself, or her either, he stood still and looked at her sympathizingly, and yet with but a vague idea of what was the matter, then at the body greedily, as if counting its value.

Its clothing indicated wealth, its face indicated purity, and a something, perhaps its immortal hovering over the mortal, indicated the true woman. To Gaff it only indicated an ample reward, if friends had already sought her. He and the old man, or rather, the old man alone, was well advised concerning all rewards offered: they had seen none for this, and the body must have been in the water long enough to excite alarm.

The stir among the crew of the sloops and other small craft that lay at anchor near, gave the old man an excuse for saying to Meg, who had resisted all attempts to draw her away, "There'll soon be a crowd 'ere, child; the river-men be already aloft, and ye mustn't be found 'ere. They'll take 'er out as soon as I tell 'em, but first—" he checked himself from saying, "I must see if anyone has advertised for this." He possessed a delicacy when in her presence wholly foreign to so rough and rude a

nature. The gem never sparkles till it is cleaned, cut and polished, yet the power to do so is innate. He knew she would shrink from the idlers who would soon flock about like vultures, and so she was willingly led away. Once or twice she tried to turn back, but the old man always raised his arm to adjust his hat, or draw his coat collar closer, so that she saw nothing more, but she still heard the washing, washing, for she drew the hood tighter about her ears.

Gaff, at a sign from his father, had remained to see that neither landsmen nor watermen interfered with their booty. He was tired, hungry, sleepy, and cross, so he jumped into the boat, and doing this slipped upon something on the bottom, and almost slipped into the river. With a mild oath at his awkwardness he sat down, curled himself in a heap, and slept while he watched. He had often done this before; thus resting while being on the alert for intruders. No, he did not sleep and he did not rest: whenever he moved his foot slipped upon the same thing on which he had slid into the boat—it was something that seemed uneasy like the body ; so to make himself more easy he reached down, and out of the mud and slime drew a small parcel longer than wide : he opened the outer covering, a sort of oiled silk, and found a few letters clinging closely to each other. He looked carefully about; no one was near, and he slipped them into his pocket.

He was still hungry, but neither sleepy nor tired, and waited, patiently, for more light to read their address. It seemed a gigantic task—but it might open to him a mine of wealth, for to Gaff, whose wants were so few, a hundred pounds or more was an exhaustless treasure.

The sun arose, but one unused to the smoke and fog would have declared it behind time; the crews of the river crafts arose, and many of them saw Gaff, and Gaff saw them ; so buttoning his coat closely, he made no attempt to read, but prepared himself to answer questions which would soon be plied to him from idlers on shore. One and another came, peered over and into the water, asked who it was, and what probably caused death. To some he gave curt replies, which meant " None of your busi-

ness;" to others he spoke of the prize as "a nice un," and made a few suggestions.

After breakfasting hastily, and seeing that Meg was well cared for, the old man first ascertained what reward had been offered for the missing—satisfied himself that none had been proposed for this one, and so notified the proper person, that he might inspect "the sweetest body ever 'ooked in."

This unusual summons gave the inspector so much curiosity to see what had been found, that, more promptly than could be expected from one in the discharge of a public duty, he accompanied the old man to where Gaff watched and waited. The crowd gathered rapidly and gazed morbidly; the inspector inspected, the body was drawn in, the rope untied, the cart was driven near, the dripping drooping figure pushed in, and the driver and horse looked toward the Morgue.

CHAPTER X.

SUSAN THUMP NEVER NEGLECTS HER DUTY.

"FOUND DROWNED—The body of an unknown female, age about twenty, hair black, complexion dark, clothing rich, figure tall, neither jewelry nor papers. Any information leading to identification will be received at the office of the Morgue."

As Susan Thump sat the next morning sipping her rose-flavored tea, and conning the latest horrors in the Daily Bee, her eye lighted upon the above—at the same time there was a gentle yet nervous tap at the outer door.

"Samuel objects to my opening the door," she said to herself. "It is well enough to keep a maid for the kitchen, but I like to be as friendly as when we did not have as much as we have now," and she gazed with pride at the silver tea-urn—wherein she saw a good-natured face in a dainty white cap, whose strings fell over a snowy kerchief held at the throat, by a likeness of Samuel set in wrought gold—at the clear china and glossy damask.

The little parlor was their breakfast, dining, supper and sitting room. Here Susan rocked, sewed and chatted; here Samuel read, wrote and dreamed. So without waiting for the little maid, paper in hand, she threw wide open the door—Susan never did things by halves,—and Meg stood without.

"Bless your heart, child, what brought you out so early? Come directly in. Tea ain't what young folks should drink, but you look ailing, Meg." While saying this Miss Thump had drawn the girl affectionately into the cozy little parlor, sat her down in her own softly-cushioned chair, and turned out a cup of fragrant tea, which none but Miss Thump could make.

"I suppose you've been watching all night with some poor mortal, and tired yourself all out. You must look out for yourself as well as others. How is Miss Martha Hamper? She complained of a deal of pain in the back, the last time I saw her."

"She seems well," replied Meg, settling back as if Mother Susan's chair was an absorber of all aches and pains, whether of head or heart, "and I am well, too. It is only the old question I ponder over, 'Who am I?' You know how I used to hear the washing, washing of something: I never could tell just what it was, and that made it more dreadful to listen to. They said it was imagination, but I know it was not. Well, for years I have been to the river by day and by night, and heard no more than others, the water peaceful or troubled, whether it was a calm or a storm; but for months past the old sound has been coming nearer and nearer, and night before last I could not sleep, it seemed to wash to my very feet. I knew uncle and Gaff were out, and I felt them drawing something through the water. If I fell asleep I was that something, if I was awake I could hear it, see it and feel it. Now and then it would stop, and I seemed to be in my mother's arms, and I could have lain there forever, I was so happy; but soon the water would wash her away, and leave me with that something. I knew I must run away from it, or I could not live; so I dressed, covered myself with my long cloak, and thought I was hurrying from it, but was only hurrying to it, for uncle and Gaff

had just tied a body, and it must have been that something, for I could not bear to look at it, and I could not bear to leave it when uncle wanted me to come home. She must have been beautiful—not much older than I, not poor, and did not have to wonder who she was. She is at the dead-house—no one has yet claimed her, or can recognize her. If I had the money, Mother Susan, what do you think I would do?" and she looked bright, and cheerful even, while answering the inquiring look on Susan's face. "I would bury her, but not in London—no, not in London. I would take her where I was once. There was no fog, no smoke there. There was sun on the green grass, and shade under the trees; all was clear and clean. There I would bury her, but not here. She does not belong here, I know." Then the shadow fell again over her face as she added after a thoughtful pause, "I cannot do it; I have no money. But, Mother Susan, I have come to ask you to go and see her, find out when they will take her away, and just before they put the lid over her, lay this over her face; let no one else touch it." And she drew a small box from her pocket, yellowed by time and worn by much opening; out of this she took tenderly, lovingly, reverently, a handkerchief of the finest web, and wiping her tears with one of coarser fabric, continued: "This was my mother's, and it has been my companion in many lonely hours, but I must lay it over *her*. She must not see the rough board they will nail over her. All yesterday and last night it has lain with some mignonette and the only rosebud my bush had, so that it will remind her of the sweet things she must have always known, and take away the smell of the water. You will do this, Mother Susan, I know."

Miss Thump knew that the girl had despondent moods, but had never heard her open her heart like this. She still held the cup, but half filled, the paper had fallen to the floor; and as Meg's quick eye caught the "Found Drowned," she cried, "There she is! Read that."

"Yes, child," replied Susan quietly, "I was just reading it as you rapped, and saying to myself, 'Susan Thump, there can be no harm in going to see her; you might, and you might not, do some good.' So, you see, it was just what

I wanted to do. But, child, do you know how dangerous it is to go to the river in the dark? Don't do it again. Can't you talk to Martha?"

Susan lost all brusqueness for the time being whenever she talked to Meg. The girl, unconsciously to both, possessed a charm over the juttings and rough sides of Susan's manner; they always smoothed down in her presence, but did not disappear, for when she was gone they came forth to other people, sometimes pretty sharply, and sometimes offensively, but never intentionally. Of one thing Susan was conscious, however, that she never could say, "Humph!" to Meg, as she certainly did to every one else.

"No, no," said the girl, "I cannot talk to Mother Martha. She listens, but she does not understand me. No one understands me but uncle—and you;" she added, "I think you do."

Susan made no reply, her throat was full and her heart was full; so she turned out the cold tea, and drew from the waiting urn a fresh warm cupful and passed it to Meg. The cup was china, with filagree of gilt around "To my son," also in gilt. This was Susan's gift to Samuel when he began to taste tea and coffee, and he had never outgrown his joy in drinking therefrom. Mr. Thump was suffering from a slight headache that morning, for which reason Susan had made tea—but even that he could not drink, so his cup stood waiting—Meg, who drank and wished she could drink forever.

"Why, child," said Susan, as she turned back with cream and sugar, "you don't drink tea clear; you like it well seasoned. You are not yourself; have another cup, and let me prepare it properly, if you are so worried you can't do it."

"That was delicious, Mother Susan," replied the girl blushing, "I must like it clear the best, for I certainly thought it just right."

Perhaps you do not know, simple-hearted Meg, what sweetened, what flavored the tea, but drink the clear strong beverage from the cup that Gaff daily uses, and, then ask yourself if it is "just right."

"This is what you always like when you don't feel

well," said Susan, sipping and stirring and creaming another cup, or rather more tea in the same cup. Here's a roll—no, take a bun. I bought those for Samuel, but not feeling well, he could not eat."

"You are good to everybody, Mother Susan, and"—Meg stopped suddenly, for she had nearly called forth a "Humph," suppressed though it was. Susan Thump did not like to be praised, and if anyone, not knowing her, persisted in it, she tossed her head, shot forth the sharp angles till she was like a grater, and the more one smoothed the more one got grated. She only did her duty, and if other people did the same the world would know less trouble,—"and I know will be glad to do *her* a kindness," added the girl.

With this skilful way of praising, Susan was not offended, and said, "I had better be going to see what time she will be taken away."

"If they will not tell you, maybe you can slip it in her hand. If she could only throw it over her face herself," said Meg.

"Don't worry; bear in mind Susan Thump has got this handkerchief, and she has closed many eyes, covered many faces"—and she might have added, without self-praise, "prayed sincerely and opened the closed way for many a weary, darkened soul as it tapped timidly at the portal that leadeth beyond—and crossed many hands." Saying this, she peered significantly into a pyramid of blooming plants, and selected a cluster of white heliotrope, a tiny rosebud, a half-blown rose and a stem of small green leaves. "That's enough; things should be according to circumstances. It is vulgar to overdo. I always tell them the simpler the better; just enough to show there's somebody cares for them."

The last she said more to herself, showing clearly that Susan Thump was at home once more in arranging funeral matters, if it were over the unknown and unclaimed, whose cortege might be the gaping crowd, whose coffin the rough box, whose resting place the "Potter's Field."

She laid aside her cup, put on her bonnet neatly trimmed with the shiniest of satin, threw over her shoul-

ders a square of the finest merino bound with black silk, and bidding Meg await her return, turned toward the Wilton—and as she passed the corner, said to herself, "If they ain't civil enough to tell me how long they'll keep her, I can just stay and see for myself; they can't frighten Susan Thump."

"Did you speak to me, ma'm?" said a meek voice at her side.

"Humph! there's your dog again. What did you say?"

"I asked if you spoke to me."

"No, nor to your dog. I haven't anything against you, but I don't like your dog," and she dropped a shilling in his hand, passed on a few steps, then turned back and said, "I wish you could see; but if you could you wouldn't be here, so I needn't waste time over you."

"I should be glad to be of use to somebody," remarked the man so sadly that Miss Thump was sorry she had spoken so sharp. "Sometimes my dog is of great assistance to people. Are you not, Rover?"

"Well, maybe you think so, but I'd like to see a dog help me," was the reply; and she looked half-scornfully, half-timidly, while Rover, who seemed to understand her contempt for all his kind and himself in particular, sat down unconcernedly, and looked at nothing and nobody in particular.

"Good Rover," said the man, "has done for me what no other would. I find, ma'm, he knows more than most, serves better than many, and never tells what he ought not to."

"But can he tell what he ought to," said Miss Thump, her curiosity aroused at the prospect of finding out something about this man, and a desire to see what remarkable talents or instinct the dog might possess. The master of the dog was quite as desirous of cultivating her acquaintance, so said, "Just try him, ma'm. You think I could help you if I could see. Let Rover take my place, he will do as well, even better."

"But I don't know as I'll need him. If he goes you'll have to go too. I wouldn't have a dog following me through the streets."

And Susan, Rover, and his master looked toward the Morgue.

CHAPTER XI.

CHANCE HAS NOT DONE THIS.

MR. WALLACE and his dog walked wearily back to Jericho. The master because he was thoughtful, and sometimes doubtful, the dog because he was tired and had found Dearie's company anything but cheerful to a dog of his active habits. Suddenly he raised his head, forgot he was tired, looked at his master as if he would say, "Let us listen, there is some one else abroad. The way is lonely just here, but I am with you, do not fear."

The master detected distant footsteps, but not so soon as the dog. They came nearer and nearer. There were few houses whose inmates would give protection if he should be molested, for the neighborhood was a bad one, so he stepped, the dog following, into the shadow of a dwelling whose crumbling walls and tumbling timbers showed that it was no longer habitable. The footsteps were now so near that the voices which accompanied them could be distinguished.

"Might as well sit down here—nothing but rats and bats—can't tell it again if they hear it," said one of the voices.

"But I haven't got much to say; and what I have got, I don't care if they do tell," said the other voice. "You know what I want, and you know what I must have. That old fellow you call uncle, I can't talk to; he's too oily in his tongue, as well as his skin. I want to know now just what you're agoin' to do, and I want it done. I've fooled long enough."

"Just take a little—always makes business slip easy—best brand—present from particular friend—never drinks any but own importations," and the owner of the first voice drew from his pocket a small flask, and turning some of its contents into its cap, handed it to the other.

"Never offer it where it can't be appreciated; know if there is a man who can tell what's what, it's Mr. Barley." Mr. Barley drank it eagerly, and did not stop till the second and the third time the cap had been filled; and as the cap to the flask was of generous size, and the amount he imbibed was enough for several Mr. Barleys, it was not passing strange that he should soon be in the best of humor with himself and all the world.

The owner of the first voice partook sparingly, and consequently his humor, which was always of the best when the world saw him, remained unchanged. He evidently knew just when Mr. Barley would be at his happiest and most accommodating stage, for he waited and watched a few moments, and then said, "Family matters, Mr. Barley."

"Eh!" replied Mr. Barley, as if a little hard of hearing and a little slow at understanding.

"Family matters," said the other, as if announcing his subject before an interested audience.

"Yes," said Mr. Barley, as if the light was glimmering faintly—"yes—understand—text, eh? you always take a text. Long, eh?"

"Well, yes, a little longer than text—but will make it short as possible."

"Ready, then;" and Barley straightened himself up and opened his eyes, as far as a man could who had been all the evening drinking himself cross, and now had taken just enough more to be happy and then stupid.

The first speaker announced his subject again, cleared his throat, and eyeing the other closely, began, "Family secret—never betray confidence?"

Barley tried to raise his right hand as if to take an oath of secrecy, bowed his head, and did not readily raise it.

"Big estate."

"How big?" inquired Barley, as if he expected its dimensions to be indicated with a measure.

"Very big."

"Ah!" said Barley, settling down a little at a time.

"Yes," continued the first voice, "very big, owner old long ago; very old now, you know."

"Of course," replied Barley, "very well too, maybe."

His shrewdness quite startled the other, and he looked sharply for other signs of shrewdness or more stupidity; whichever came would govern his next accordingly. But nothing came, and, concluding that it was a remark made more involuntarily than understandingly, he ventured again: "Family matters—owner left—can't be found—must be dead—couldn't be alive—too old."

"How old?" asked Barley, settling down more and more. As this latter was a good sign the other continued, without heeding the question, "Nobody there—bats, moles, owls maybe—mould inside—weeds outside—money inside, plenty. Heirs all dead but two—uncle's one—a young lady's two—can't help getting it—crown gets it in one year, so they must get it before. Family secret, Mr. Barley, but you must know. Now uncle's despondent—getting old you know."

"And oily, too," suggested Mr. Barley.

"Freak of nature," pursued the other, again startled by his shrewdness, and determined not to be offended at this allusion to his uncle's infirmity, went on, "Looks on the dark side—too honest to say he'll pay till he gets money in hand. That, Mr. Barley, is why he says can't pay now—family secret—don't betray—sign this."

Mr. Barley was settling faster all the time, and at the last sentence stopped settling, but could do no more. He tried to rise, as if he had a faint idea that he was about to make a worse fool of himself if he signed than he had done when he drank, so said, "Can't do it—two heirs—uncle one—Barley two."

"No, not exactly, Barley, but might be, if you could make t'other heir Mrs. Barley."

"G-oo-d, g-oo-d, M-r-s. B-a-r-l-e-y, m-o-u-l-d needs m-o-n-e-y plenty, p-l-e-n-t-y, w-h-a-t, m-o-u-l-d? W-h-r-e's M-is-sis B-a-r-l-e-y?" The words grew longer and the settling began again.

"Happy thought that, congratulate you—smell cake and wine now—sign this and get introduction to-morrow night, No. 40 Chapel Street—eight o'clock. Don't know she's worth a dollar—love her for herself—that's the way to catch 'em—sign this," and he held the man's hand while he wrote "Tom Barley" by the glimmer of a short

waxen taper he lighted and held so that Wallace looked fairly into the face of one whom he had hunted London over to meet—the face of Ralph Speeder, whom the Little Man had found at No. 36 Knickknack Street; and as it was certain he had left there, and uncertain just where he had gone, Mr. Wallace was not long in deciding to follow him.

Barley's exertion in signing had been too great for him, and he settled into a heap like a limp rag, murmuring—"M-o-u-l-d m-o-n-e-y."

The other rolled him out of the way of any passer by, and as he did so, Mr. Wallace saw his fingers deftly slipped into Barley's pocket, then into his own; just what they carried he could not tell.

"Chance has not done this," he said to himself, as he quietly followed Ralph Speeder's retreat. He knew if he lost his track the dog would find it, so he leisurely and still more thoughtfully walked on. The young man was evidently suspicious and cautious, even when he thought no one was abroad to see him, for he took a circuitous route—now dodging into an obscure street, and hurriedly emerging into a larger and lighter—then slowly and leisurely walking, as if returning from some fair visitant, and like an honest man seeking home.

At last he made a plunge into a poorly lighted, poorly built and poorly inhabited street, called Poorly's Resort—at least such was to be seen on the sign of the low tavern which headed the court. The host, Poorly, could not have selected in all London a more appropriate residence; to be sure he might have found hundreds as good, but none better suited in all respects. After he had plunged in, the man crept back, looked up and down—but saw no one; Mr. Wallace and the dog were in the shadow of a building whose projections afforded them protection.

Again he was lost, again the pursuers emerged and walked stealthily on. He looked into a small window, tapped gently thrice, waited a moment, tapped twice, another moment, and tapped once. At this a figure within moved, sidled to the door, and opened it carefully. Ralph stepped in without a word; the door was shut, and Mr. Wallace as carefully drew near the window. He looked

and listened; he waited and watched, sometimes with bated breath, and sometimes breathing so heavily from stifled emotion that he pressed his hand over his mouth, lest he might be heard within. He looked and saw the man who had admitted Ralph; and though he had tracked him for years, he had not looked upon his face since the man was younger in years, more comely in features, more rich in attire, more respected by others because more respected by himself, more innocent in deed, but none the less guilty in heart, only waiting for time to make him what he now was. And time had done well his work; he had written miser, craven, coward, and cunning worker. All these Mr. Wallace read, and in the reading was not surprised. The bud and the flower he had known gave promise of just the fruit they had become.

He listened and heard, "You've been at your old tricks; yes, you have. Don't shake your head, I met Barley. You don't know the pounds, shillings and pence —I do. I saw the string he holds you for. Now keep on, just keep on, and when you get your 'lawful inheritance,' ha! that's good, lawful, legal, rightful. When you get it, I say, there will be so many fingers that can grasp over it, that you can count what's left now as well as by and by."

"A man can't—"

"Yes, he can too. Just keep on, but don't ask me to help you out. I've played nephew to a rich uncle over the sea till I fleeced them all, and sold what belonged to the haberdasher to a picker from a second-hand shop. That can't last always. You said, 'Let's be economical till we get it.' Fifty pounds you lost last night, seventy pounds to-night. How much to-morrow night! eh?—I've got brass, I know, I can play gent of leisure, take in the fool's money, but can't manage Barley much longer. Says he'll take a little—say twenty pounds a month."

"Where am I to raise that?" said the uncle, with a frightened look, and an expression which said, "I have all I can bear now." "If I could get it, I would not ask Barley to lend me," he added in a whining tone.

"Ha! that's something you've always kept from me,

my most honored uncle, but don't I suspect? I think so. Where you keep it, I don't know, but you've got some. Now see here, when I sold off in Knickknack Street, and barely saved myself from being sold off, who do you think bought my second-hand stuff?" and the nephew watched the effect with delight. He had a victim, an uncle in wickedness and deceit, but no tie by blood held them. He had, when younger, done his bidding, sometimes willingly and sometimes unwillingly, according to what had been bidden. He had played, from childhood, whatever part it pleased the man, according to the plot and plan he was developing. He had grown so rapidly in deceit that he had long laid miniature traps into which his master had fallen, and he had netted, always shillings sometimes pounds. But his aims were increasing as years and wants increased. He knew there was a fund, notwithstanding the uncle—we will call him so—protested he lived upon a future inheritance. Barley had signed off all claim, or rather all attempts to claim, for one year. If he rebelled against the mode of signing how could he prove the indebtedness? Ralph had slipped the notes and accounts from his pocket, and this little parcel was what Mr. Wallace had seen transferred so deftly—enough so, he thought, for one who had not engaged in this mode of seizure for the first time. "Who do you think? Did you say? ah! beg pardon. Thought you recognized," he continued in a taunting tone.

The glands began to work, the oil oozed, not imperceptibly, but in great drops; the fingers grew tired, the handkerchief grew sticky, the hands were nervously clasped and unclasped; the man said in a low tone he meant for a don't-care one, but which was illy concealed, "No one who can harm me now. I'm too near it. She's come, and she can't show her papers. One is enough, I ain't doing her a wrong, she won't be poor." Thus he tried to assure himself, yet there was still a shadow on his track; it may have been the shadow of his pursuers, it may have been the shadow of misdeeds, or it may have been an invisible, impalpable shadow, whose strength lies in its mysterious comings and goings.

"You're off the subject, good uncle," continued the

youth with a leer. "Let me tell you who I mean, it will sound good to you—sweet music—now listen," and he bent over and whispered, "Isaac Harold."

The uncle started, looked fixedly at the wall, dingy with smoke and time, and out of it he seemed to see coming one of the shadows; and which? "I heard you, but there is something I am more afraid of than Isaac Harold. There used to be one, but now there are two," and he covered his face, and shook all over till he shook the very chair. His skin was hot and parched. The glands could show the workings of a troubled conscience rather than the workings of a wicked brain, so they had refused to labor, and fever suddenly followed. He parted his long fingers and looked. The shadow must have been becoming substance, for he quickly closed them and crouched down: his lips parted, but no sound came forth, only a hot breath which seemed to fill the small room. At last his hand fell as if thrown from his face by another; he raised it, again it fell.

The fever was followed by a chill, and the chill left him as one frozen, yet seeing the something between himself and the wall. He seemed trying to close his eyes to it, but the lids refused to move, the muscles were bound. Thus he sat, and thus he had sat before, though always alone. The frozen look melted into horror, the horror into despair, and from despair he awoke as from a frightful dream. He looked about timidly, rubbed his eyes, looked with more assurance when he saw no one but Ralph in the room, passed his hand over his knotty forehead, whispered as he pointed to the wall—"There's two now—there used to be but one." At the sound of his voice, even feeble as it was, he began to shake again and covering his eyes whined, "They come out of the wall. How long will they keep coming? I begged the other one to go, and she did. I haven't seen her for a long time till last night, and then she brought another. I'll leave the room; but it won't do any good—she'd follow me." And he looked again as if some irresistible impulse compelled him. "They're stepping off—I see, I hear, oh! I hear it," and he pressed his fingers to his ears, but shook his head as if it were useless.

And it is useless, oh man of sinful plotting! The sound thou hearest is not of the external—it is the echo of wicked deeds; and thus will they echo and re-echo throughout eternity till thou hast suffered as thou hast made others suffer, till thou hast burned the dross from thy soul by such penance as no physical pain can give. There is good in thy soul—none was ever created without. It may be long ages before it can find light through so much that is evil within, but it will make itself manifest, though thy soul will show scars, many and deep, in the battle of right against wrong.

Ralph stared at the man, his master, as if he doubted his own senses; at first he thought of sudden and fatal attacks that he had heard of, caused by undue excitement. But when he began to rave, it seemed to faintly dawn upon him that there was cause for these, not idle, fancies—that the man had been years in preparing the warp which conscience could, in a few moments, fill in with the woof of his own making also. He was dulled to all tenderness or pity: he was selfish, sordid, avaricious, and how could he be anything besides? Heart, soul and brain had been fed with nothing else. So, thinking to make light of it, he said,

"You're playing off, old man, and don't want to talk about Isaac Harold. Did you hear me tell you?"

"Yes," said the other, "and why didn't you tell me before?"

"I don't tell all I know, just keep that in mind," and he bent down and whispered something in his ear.

The man started as if a new thunderbolt were hurled at him, but regained himself in some measure before he answered, "Yes, I know they go together, but I am too near it. They can't keep me from it now. I shall soon be all right. Time is short."

"Yes," said a voice from without, "time is short, but eternity is long. The lesson you might have read from the wall has had no effect. Greed has swallowed you in truth." But the voice was not heard, nor the owner of it, for he and his dog stepped into a little by-way, and Ralph, thinking it best to leave before another attack, said, "Remember, twenty pounds. I'll see you to-morrow.

I've promised Barley," and passed by them on his way to finish the night with companions like himself.

Nature had not done her worst, and most decidedly she had not done her best, in the putting together of Ralph Speeder's moral composition. Yet, had he fallen beneath the pruning hook, guided by a wise parental hand, he might have made an average man—but never could he, by soil however fertile, by showers however gentle, and sun however life-giving, have been made in this life a man of loving impulses, of generous actions or conscientious feelings: he lacked the essentials for these spontaneous outgrowths. But he fell by force of circumstances into the hands of Marplot, and the worst side of his nature developed as rapidly as example, precept, and encouragement could make it. He had followed his uncle, father, or friend, whichever it was deemed best to consider him, sometimes upon ample allowance, sometimes upon allowance not ample, but of late it had grown too small entirely for the needs of London life, London jollity and London resorts. When Isaac Harold found him he had, a little time before, been successful in a game of draw, and had fleeced some unsuspecting ruralists out of a goodly sum, so goodly, that he thought to cut loose from his master and teacher, thinking he had well enough learned the way of evil to look out for himself. This he had contemplated upon the secret advice of Tom Barley, who, if the truth were known, had hoped to cut loose too. But from a sterner hand than Marplot's, from a keener eye, from a quicker brain than Ralph's, sought he to flee. He had the hard sense, however, not to venture, not to even intimate that he harbored a thought of the venture, till he saw how matters would turn with that worthy. He had advanced for Marplot, and had taken what he began to deem poor security—a prospective fortune; but both the advancing and the security he kept from the knowledge of the one he hoped to leave. It was his business to advance, but upon something which could be seen and handled, not such a gauzy thing as a prospect; and knowing he would be, not only harshly criticised, but roughly shaken, he, for once held his

tongue and kept sober, for in keeping sober alone lay his security.

Speeder rented in Knickknack Street, sported with the swells thereof, ran up bills which soon ran him down and back to his old quarters: he aped the manners of those no better than himself, but of somewhat better breeding. Had he been clever, he would have held his place among them, and have fleeced one day and been fleeced the next, as they did, and were, sometimes with pounds by the thousands, and sometimes only with shillings that could be tallied on the fingers; but the streak of luck ruined him, that is, ruined him for that life. Had he worked himself into it he might have been successful, but he leaped into it, and was therefore dazed by the sudden plenty.

He learned but one thing, to talk in a choppy manner, and that we find him practicing when he interviewed Isaac Harold at the instance of the charwoman of the house, who had often summoned the gatherer for similarly situated lodgers, but none, she thought, who had run so swift a race as this one. We say he learned but this one thing—so when he raised enough to take him to cheap lodgings, he took to the lower grade of vice without having learned any of the tricks and arts of the higher. Mr. Barley watched his rise and fall, and was himself content. But not so with Ralph, the taste of life in Knickknack Street had spoiled him for that of Poorly's Resort, and what he had would not long suffice; so he found, upon a little thinking, that an income might be obtained from the protector of his childhood and the teacher of his youth.

Marplot, he was certain, had money hidden somewhere—he owed Tom Barley, for play he would now and then, although not nearly so much as he had the name of, for by pleading debts of honor he could, or had ofttimes obtained help to pay off, and thus added to the weight and value of what he called the "lookouts for old age." He had kept Tom at bay by the promise of the slice of the coming fortune, but that advancer of loans was beginning to press, and press the more eagerly, because hoping each day might bring the fortune. He had kept sober, lest as we said, if he lost control of his wits, he would lose

control of his tongue, and the one he so dreaded might learn to what extent he had let the pounds out with no security but a prospective one.

Thus things stood on the night when Mr. Wallace and the dog stepped into the shadow of the old house.

CHAPTER XII.

OF ROVER AND HIS MASTER, JOE AND ISAAC.

"OUT of respect to Great Heart the parent does not mix method with time, dearie, so this morning when he takes the new lodger to Boggs he leaves the sack at home."

The Little Man laid the gatherings he had been assorting carefully away, folded the sack, deposited it in the drawer of the nondescript piece of furniture, put everything in complete order, fed the starling with some crumbs that Mr. Wallace had left for her, and having "straightened" himself, threw his cloak over his shoulders, drew a black pyramidal hat on his head, nodded to Dearie, opened the door, but turned back before he had crossed the threshold and muttered to himself, "How I feel this morning! Curse him! curse him! I can always tell when he has done some of his bad deeds. I guess they whisper it to me, only I don't hear it plain, and so they put it in my mind. I shall hear of him soon, or else what he has done. I shall just go back and put this big pin into him," and he drew from his cloak a large brass pin that held it together at the throat, and plunged it again and again into an old pin-cushion. "I wish I knew you could feel it. Ha! ha! I said I'd make gatherings of needles and pins —just look at that!" and he held up for the cushion's inspection a paper on which there were two or three rows of needles. "Don't they shine? ain't they sharp? D'ye see them, eh? Just wait till I hear of him, and you shall feel every one. I won't do it till after the day's gathering and I have time to stab you slowly. Ha! ha! they're sharp,

and they can pierce! He has hurt so many, and he is going to hurt somebody again, or else he has done it, *they* don't tell me which. Let me stab you once more, and then I'll take the pin with me, so that you'll know I'll use it when I come home and take off my cloak."

This time he almost sank the head into the cushion, so eager was he to make good his promise.

"That will do. Ha! ha! the devil can't have him yet." Chattering and grinning he drew out the pin, fastened his cloak with it, and hurried out of Blue Bottle Court into the larger and busier streets, where, when not lost in the bustle and crowd, he was lost in the fog; so we shall not follow, but meet him as he nears the corner of the Wilton and Lunley Lane—and as he did this he heard a scraping on the pavement as of one groping with a stick. He looked around but saw no one; he looked down and saw a dog; attached to the dog was a collar, attached to the collar was a string, attached to the string was a man.

The dog, the master, and Isaac Harold were well trained. Neither recognized the other, yet the dog once so far forgot himself that his tail wagged about half a wag, and his feet were light and springy, as if he would like to leap on somebody's shoulders; but some dogs are more social than others, and it may have been but a natural delight at meeting some one else abroad; so the wag and the spring may have been half imaginary.

"Good morning, friend," said Isaac, as he waited for the man to solicit alms. Rover now felt himself at liberty to wag, but not as a friend, only as a dog who was ever on the alert for his master's welfare, and ready to look thanks for the shillings and pence that might be dropped into the outstretched hand.

"Good—hark, friend," said the blind man, stopping short as he began to return the Little Man's salutation, "hark, Rover." He strained his eyes as if he would and could see through the ugly green glasses he wore; he clenched his fist as if ready for a blow at some unseen foe; the veins in his neck and forehead swelled, his breath came rapidly and convulsively. The Little Man heard what the blind man heard, for he was about to say "Listen," when the latter said "Hark." His thin legs

seemed to draw up as if in danger of spasms, he pulled his peaked hat tightly down over his head, caught hold of the brass pin at his throat, as if to make this his weapon of defence, and he listened. Rover's every hair stood up, every tooth, every claw, and every muscle showed aggression. His low growl the blind man hushed, and in silence they waited. Shambling, sidling, sneaking along came Marplot, who evidently felt himself nearing an abyss, for he took off his hat, yet the morning was cool, almost cold, took out his handkerchief, and wiped rapidly, but the glands outworked him, and looking about in a frightened way, alarmed either at the abyss or at the unusual labor of the glands, turned, not suddenly—for he could do nothing suddenly—and went from, not by, the corner of the Wilton and the Lunley. The blind man for the moment lost control of himself, and might have sprung forward in the direction whence he felt, as well as heard, Marplot coming; but the Little Man said in tremulous tones and suppressed emotion, "Time is not up, friend. We are not in a hurry. We work by method, and it takes time."

"You are right," replied the blind man, opening his clenched fist: the nails of his fingers were crimson, so deeply had each left the imprint on the palms.

"I seldom lose myself, but—" and thinking of what Mr. Wallace, for they were old friends, had heard the night before, indignation choked his words. "Do you know the man who came near?"

"I have met him," replied Isaac Harold, "when I didn't want to, and when I was in a hurry to get away from him, but I shall meet him again when I do want to and shall have plenty of time," and while saying this he tugged at the brass pin. "Let him go, he's not ready for me yet, nor the devil either. He can't have him till I get through with him."

The blind man now chided himself for such a display of passion, for it was impossible to tell how many of the Lunleys were peeping through half-closed blinds, or who else might have seen him. He soothed the dog, who soon cast down head and tail, as if he too saw how foolish he had been to let temper get such control of hair,

teeth, and claws. They were not long in assuming their respective *roles*, for footsteps were again approaching, but they were honest, manly footsteps, from which one had naught to fear; they cleared the ground as if their owner was not ashamed of his comings and goings.

The mendicant looked pleased, Rover looked knowing, and the Little Man looked expectant.

The steps came nearer and nearer, till Joe looked inquiringly about. Isaac recognized him from the description Mr. Wallace had given him, and advancing, said, "You are Joe, I am Isaac Harold. You are to go to Mistress Boggs, I am to take you there. You are to watch, I am to gather. You are seeking business, fame, and fortune; I am seeking justice, and through justice revenge. This is the blind man who will tell you by day what Great Heart would tell you by night. There's so much to do and so little time to do it, that Great Heart is busy all day. He leaves his dog with this man; so you see what you can't tell him just slip into Rover's mouth, you know he'll never lose it."

As the Little Man chattered this, he looked Joe from head to toe, with his head on one side, then on the other, very much as if he were deciding upon the quality and price of a gathering. Finally he said, "Yes, you will do; yes, *they* tell me you will do."

"I shall try to do," replied Joe, "so long as it is honest to do."

"You'll never say 'Time's up,' because it isn't honest," said Isaac, as if a little hurt that such a suspicion should lurk in Joe's mind. "Great Heart wouldn't be in it, if it wasn't honest, and you never heard that Isaac Harold was dishonest. It is his honesty that makes him a poor gatherer," and he adjusted his peaked hat with his hand, while the cuff of his jockey's coat swept off a tear as it passed up. Some tender seal was raised, and the spring beneath it so troubled that it sent forth one drop. But the seal was instantly closed, yet the tear had not escaped the eye of Joe—it dropped from the cup into his heart.

It told him of a man of truth and honor, who had seen his dearest hopes destroyed, who had waited for

time and justice to bring revenge, who was odd and perhaps whimsical, but whose oddities had been born of a good-humor which had kept him from sinking in the waves of trouble that had swept about him, but would not let them wash over him.

Joe was sorry for having, in any way, hurt the Little Man, so he frankly, heartily extended his hand and said, "When you know me better, you will know I meant no harm. We are to share the business now, the fame and fortune by and by. I am ready to go to Mistress Boggs."

"And she is ready to see you, or rather your shillings," said the Little Man as he let go of Joe's hand after a cordial shake. "She is sharp, Mistress Boggs is, and that you will soon find out. Speak a good word *to* poor Boggs whenever you can, but never *for* him, that would put more 'cats in the area,' in fact they would never get out. How Boggs must hate cats;" this last he said to himself, for Joe turned to the master of the dog.

"Good morning, sir," said he, "I may, and hope I shall come often to your corner as bearer of tidings of progress in the cause. I know your dog now, and shall you too, soon. Have you hurt your hand? Did you fall?"

"No, good friend," replied the blind man, "one passed by or near who will bear a close lookout on him, to-day, to-morrow, and many days, the sneak, the coward."

"Yes, yes," interrupted Joe, "I know him. Mr. Wallace gave me such good descriptions of all, that I should know them. But I must leave you, sir; good day."

"Good day, good day," replied the beggar, and he was left alone with the dog.

All this had escaped the vigilant eye of Miss Thump, on account of Samuel's headache, which occupied her, while Isaac was nearing the Lane, in coaxing it to leave with sundry applications; and while he was turning toward Cross-Cut Lane, she was likewise applying restoratives, sympathy and kindness to Meg's heartache.

The blind man had not fully recovered his mental equipoise, and so was glad to follow Miss Thump on her way to the Morgue.

"Now we are going to Mistress Boggs, and must be

careful just how we go," said Isaac, in a confidential way to Joe, as he took his arm to turn him off the Wilton after they had gone a short distance.

Joe looked a little surprised, and asked what difference it made so they reached the home of that lady.

"You don't understand me," said the Little Man, "I mean just how we approach her. You know if you smooth a cat the way the fur goes she will purr, but start the wrong way and she'll strike you. It all depends upon the start. Now you won't always find the fur in the same direction with Mistress Boggs, you must always stand off a little and look. Let somebody else begin to smooth and if she shows her claws, you smooth the other way. I sometimes get scratched a little myself, but it is always when I treat Boggs as if it were Boggs and wife. Now remember, it is Boggs and husband. I am sorry for Boggs and you will be too, but it makes the fur wrong to show it. Let her see at once that you think him a nobody and you're all right."

"So I must begin by being a little deceitful?" said Joe.

"No, not exactly, for poor Hiram Boggs is a nobody, and always will be till he can say, 'Look after the cats yourself, I don't care if the area's full.' But I'm afraid he will never say that; he loses courage every day," replied the Little Man shaking his head despondingly.

They soon reached the shop. The sign Joe read, the parrot he heard. The door was unlatched, they pushed it open, the bell tingled, Hiram peeped out, disappeared. Mistress Boggs did not peep, but entered boldly and looked back, as she closed the door that led to the sitting-room, as if she were warning somebody or something not to follow her. Whoever or whatever it was did not venture to disobey her and was heard to move away.

The lady was never free with her neighbors and did not permit them to be free with her, so lest some of them might enter and see and hear too much, and as the passage from the shop to the other door was very narrow, she turned without speaking and motioned them into the room she had just left. Isaac led the way as they entered. Joe noticed there was a stealthy retreat through a door-

way on the opposite side of the room. "It must be poor Boggs," thought he. And it was. Mistress Boggs had not noticed the exit, and supposing of course, he must be near, said, "Boggs, there's a— He's gone to see about it," she remarked, turning around.

"Good morning, Mr. Harold; I am glad to see you," and she extended a hand, large but not generous, active but not cheerful.

"Good morning, ma'm," returned Mr. Harold. "I've brought him, you see—the new lodger, ma'm. This, Mistress Boggs, is Mr. Joseph." He hesitated, looked at Joe, who suggested, Matsell.

"Yes, ha! ha! you see I had forgotten, ma'm—Mr. Matsell. Ten shillings per week, in advance, and no extras but what will be paid for as extras."

"Good morning, Mr. Matsell," said Mistress Boggs clutching at the imaginary ten shillings in her pocket, eyeing Joe closely, as if he were offered for sale at the shop, and smiling a welcome. "I hope you will be satisfied. We are poor, but we try to do right. I was unfortunate, sir, in my youth. Hiram Boggs won my innocent heart, and I thought of love alone—not of bread and butter. But I soon found he lacked ambition, had no aspirations, yet he is not a bad man—he don't know enough for that," she added with spirit. "So you see, sir, I must keep a shop and be poor all my days. You will pity me, sir, when you see how I am tried. But I try to be resigned. It is my cross, our good Mr. Peerie says, and he is right."

Joe sighed and looked so sympathetic that Mistress Boggs sighed again, and there was a poor little heart on the other side of the closed door that was ever sighing, and it was of him Joe was thinking. The Little Man did not sigh, for he had not heard the cause for it. He was tugging at the brass pin, and thinking of the man who had passed near him.

Lest her feelings might overcome her again, Joe proposed that he should see his room. They went up a flight of clean, but uncovered and narrow stairs, that led from the room into a passage-way as bare and narrow, and this to a room small, neat, but sparsely furnished. A bed, a small table, one chair and a few pegs in the wall

for the suspension of his wardrobe completed the outfit of Joe's head-quarters to "business, fame, and fortune."

Joe looked out of the only window: it was clear and clean, and looked upon No. 40, second floor back, and also upon the entrance to the same dwelling, so well did Cross-Cut Lane deserve its name.

"It is not the accommodations, but the site I pay for," he said to himself, as he counted out the ten shillings in advance. Mistress Boggs did not sigh, she seemed glad that Hiram was what he was, for the money was swept into her pocket with an air that said, "He will never know how much it is," and she left the room.

Isaac lingered a few moments, then said, "Time's up, Joe, the gatherings are piling up, I am getting in a hurry to take them. If you want me, it might be you could send Hiram. Always be sly about it, though. Speak *to* him, remember, not *for* him—Ha! ha!" he burst forth as he pointed out of the window at a pompous little figure in shiny cloth and polished boots. "What fish is that?"

Joe looked where he pointed, and answered without hesitation "Trout."

"Good! good! you will do for the business; I must tell Great Heart. It makes me feel as if I wanted straightening out. But there's not room here. I must hurry where I can find room. Good by," and doubled up with laughter and the desire to "straighten out," he and his peaked hat darted down the stairway and into the street. This was the morning on which Lawyer Trout had been announced by Zeke, and this was the morning we, *un*announced, entered also.

CHAPTER XIII.

MISS RAY WELCOMED TO THE HOME OF HER ANCESTORS.

A SOFT rustle on the stairway, a small foot in the passage, a motion as if a hand were extended to meet the door, and Mr. Trout stood face to face with his client.

He had prepared himself well for the meeting; from the scant locks that covered his head—or rather that fell far short of covering—to the tips of his boots, all was neatness, nicety, and without a wrinkle. He arose and profoundly bowing advanced, then, as if in some doubt for what reason he had advanced, began a retreat till he stood again in front of the chair he had so hurriedly quitted. His fob-chain—who ever saw a portly gentleman without a fob-chain?—luckily ended in an enormous seal, and this he firmly grasped with one hand, placed the other behind him, and stiffening his knees, bowed again.

"This is Miss Ray, I presume. Ah, yes, quite certain of it. Most happy to welcome you to the home of your ancestors." Here came a painful pause, for he opened his mouth as if he would say more—and Miss Ray seeing this waited before replying.

The truth was Mr. Trout could face judge, jury, defendant, plaintiff and a score of fellow-counsellors, with a crowd of witnesses in the background, and never feel abashed or lost for a word either in a speech prepared or impromptu; but to face the brightest pair of eyes, fairest complexion, rosiest cheeks, and lithest form that ever returned to the "home of their ancestors," was more than he had the power to keep self-possession under, and the remainder of the address of welcome he had so carefully worded and so many times conned on his way from the office in Lunley Lane to the residence of Mrs. Mutter, No. 40 Chapel Street, was lost to himself, for he could never again think of it, so completely had those bright eyes winked it out of existence—lost to Miss Ray and lost to the world. The last, we fear, has sustained the greatest loss, for we think he had intended some allusion to the Young Republic that had been her home since she could remember, and before too; and from so legal and practical a mind as that of S. S. Trout, it seemed a great pity that his ideas upon that great and growing country, however trivial they might be, should not have been "made a note of."

Miss Ray, with the instinct of her sex, saw his embarrassment, and came instantly to the rescue. "I am

indebted to you, Mr. Trout, for having ascertained my ancestors as well as their home," she said, laughing so merrily that Mr. Trout, though much surprised, laughed too—and after laughing found it more difficult than ever to speak, so not knowing what else to do, laughed again. Miss Ray, not seeing a similar effort called for on her part, said quietly, "I was much astonished at the receipt of your letter, though I need not add, agreeably so."

The lawyer cleared his throat, released his fob, unbent his knees, and as Miss Ray had seated herself, he made himself alike more comfortable. The sinister look was creeping back, the eyes were beginning to twinkle slyly, the smile was becoming bland and meaningless as a smile, in short, the legal was veiling the social, the lawyer the man. "Ahem," and he seemed making ready to quiz, when he caught again the bright eyes gazing curiously, merrily at him, and they brought him back to the man again. He had been little among the fair sex, except as an adviser for some woful creature behind a rusty crape veil—but none the less to be pitied and helped because the crape was rusty; or some sharp-visaged maiden of years, perhaps near his own, seeking redress from the devices of ill-disposed relatives,—and such, heretofore, had been his clients. But here came a young girl, winsome and innocent, and, above all, heiress to golden coffers. What wonder that the lawyer and the man were sadly confused?

"And so you had no inkling in all these years of the good fortune in store for you?" he said, facing the bright eyes, and determined to keep them so constantly in view that he should not again forget where he was.

"None at all, I assure you," she replied, "and how you found me out is what I have been asking myself many times a day. I promised myself it should be the first thing settled when I saw you. And now I should like the question answered truly before we enter into any further business relations."

This common sense view of what another might have called romantic, and not wished the illusion, if there was any, dispelled, quite astonished Mr. Trout, and under

her eager gaze he felt uneasy, but was too artful to betray it. He hesitated for a reply. She saw it.

"I think it should be the first fact disclosed to me," she continued, "and then we shall know just what to think of each other." This last was a little feminine ambiguity which Mr. Trout did not clearly see the force of, being accustomed to look at all statements in the light of reason; for is not the law reason? were they ever at odds? So viewing it legally he could see no reason it should affect their opinions one of the other—such delightful incongruities were unknown to him.

Smoothing his scant locks and crossing his knees he said, "Really, Miss Ray, you ask me a very plain question, and you may wonder that I cannot give you a reply to suit it in candor, for the name of the one who found you alone—and—and I may add without offense, almost penniless, and recognized you as the future Mistress of Ivandale, does not wish himself to be known: he is far too modest, timid, you know." We think just here, that Mr. Trout was thinking of the secretions, for he hesitated, a shade of disgust passed over his face. He was no doubt mentally comparing his two clients.

He had always served in his profession, heretofore, without discrimination as to the personal attractions of those who sought his aid and advice, but at the present moment it seemed almost an impossibility that he could ever again smile blandly upon the cunning shopman, the honest tradesman, and the heartless landlord, who dropped in now and then for a little light to be thrown upon the rights of creditors, note holders, and tenants, and who we must confess, though with all due respect to Mr. Trout's power of elucidation, often went away as much in the fog mentally and legally, as, living in London, they were apt to be physically.

"Then you are in honor bound not to reveal his name?" she replied, in a disappointed tone. "If ever I become Mistress of Ivandale, I must surely repay him amply for his disinterestedness. Such it must be, for you wrote me that I was the sole heir—so he cannot hope to profit by it."

"No, no; certainly not," said the lawyer, assuming a

little of his bustling air. "I have read of such people, but never met one before, upon my honor. I never thought of looking at him in a disinterested light. Must be though. He must belong to the Society for the Promotion of Disinterested Motives," and he laughed at his own wit, and likewise at the bare idea that such a society could exist. The truth was Mr. Trout was delighted at the successful manner in which he was managing this case: he was bewitched with the eyes, the complexion, the cheeks and the form, so he must exert himself to be witty and fascinating, and lead as much off the subject for which he had called as possible, so that he might easily find pretext for coming again.

"Very well," returned Miss Ray, "it makes little matter whether he has been disinterested or not, I shall reward him just the same;" and she looked as if there never were a lady bountiful to compare with her in grace and dignity, so charmingly did she seem already to be dispensing her substance.

That point settled, the lawyer adroitly kept from allusion to business, and they talked of her voyage, friends, not relatives, left in America, the peculiarities of London, and many trivialities that Mr. Trout was astonished to find became suddenly of so much interest to him. In a delicate way Miss Ray alluded to the fact that she had been supplied with means through his hands, and from whomsoever it came, whether the disinterested person or some other, she desired to express her sincere thanks.

Just as Mr. Trout was about to reply the door opened and "an applicant" was ushered in by Zeke. Mrs. Mutter always had a "wacancy." As Zeke was under strict orders never to turn a person or a penny from the door, he invariably assured the would-be lodger that a "wacancy" was about to be made; for he knew the quick brain of Mrs. Mutter could contrive one on the shortest notice. The applicant was a man, short, stooping slightly, face somewhat browned from exposure, but honest and manly; his dress was not seedy yet not of the latest pattern. He did not seem embarrassed, but was apparently as sincere as an applicant could be. The last remark of the lady he had heard, for Zeke stood at the parlor door hesi-

tatingly, before ushering him in ; yet, as there was no other reception room, he knew of no alternative but to intrude upon the interview of the "pretty lady" and the lawyer. He accordingly opened the door, the man entered and prevented Mr. Trout from replying. The latter, feeling it a little unsafe to be seen by too many, took out his watch, expressed much surprise to find the morning had nearly passed, and, begging pardon for having tarried so long, arose, but as he did so, the lawyer was himself again, and slipping out memorandum and pencil said, "Full name, if you please, Miss Ray."

"Margaret," she replied.

"Sufficient at present; I may call with papers of importance soon;" and grasping the great seal in one hand and hat in the other, Mr. Trout began his retreat, not this time to a chair but to the door. He bowed and glanced at the pretty face, bowed again, glanced again, and was fast nearing the doorway and also Mrs. Mutter, who, glad of an opportunity to see and hear whatever she could, and what she could not to supply, had held herself in readiness at a moment's notice. His retreat was not rapid, for the eyes were growing more charming as it became more apparent that the outside door would soon shut him out from their light, so that Mrs. Mutter had a chance to retreat too, which she was compelled to do, into the passageway, and there, in her discomfiture, abide till he turned and passed out, as Zeke opened the door.

Miss Ray, of course, arose to leave, but not until the man had noted well her every feature. "Very like," he said to himself, "but she lacks the dimple. That's settled, then; you can come, Sir Lawyer, I will not object."

Mrs. Mutter would have given this man a week's lodging had she been able to catch these words, but she did not know they had been spoken, she only thought he was pleased by her pretty face, for he looked after her, not rudely, but with more than the interest of a casual admirer.

"Good morning, sir," said that worthy hostess.

"Good morning, ma'm," replied the applicant. "I called to see if—" He hesitated, for he was thinking for what purpose he really did call.

Mrs. Mutter, who, as we before said, could not suffer a pause, continued as if it were entirely natural, as indeed it was, for her to complete what others commenced—"If I had a wacancy? Just one, sir; one, and only had it an hour. I never can keep 'em, sir. Vacant in the morning, called for by noon, and occupied by night. There's nothing like being popular. I've been called popular Mrs. Mutter, sir, so much by my lodgers, that one of 'em who was 'ard of 'earing, actually asked me once if my first name wasn't Popular. So you—"

The applicant saw there was, nor would be, no end to her tongue, so he said, "I beg your pardon, ma'm, I am short of time and must hurry away. It is interesting to hear you, ma'm, but I must now hear about the price and accommodations; so if you will please state them, I will mention them to the gentleman I am to meet in an hour.—It is for him, not myself."

"Single?" said the landlady.

"Yes."

"Young?"

"Not young and not old."

"Widower?"

"No."

"That's good, I mostly object to widowers; they are sly. They don't find things, of course, in a 'ouse where there's many to look after just as at 'ome. They expect it, though. But how can one lone woman look after so many, just as if she 'ad but one to see to? Now the first—"

"Then you would take him if he should be suited?" said the man, again breaking in; "but if you have an application before I return, do not lose the chance, for he may have found accommodations by the time I see him," and he arose to leave. Mrs. Mutter surprised at this business-like way of treating a vacancy at her popular house, stood silent for once as the man bowed and left. As he passed out, Zeke said, "Wacancy suit, sir? always can make one."

Joe Matsell stepped out of No. 40 Chapel Street, congratulating himself on this master-stroke, which he knew would pleasantly surprise Mr. Wallace, and he

hoped would lay aside one obstacle in the road to fame and fortune.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LANE HAD NOT GONE, BUT THE BLIND MAN HAD.

When Isaac Harold left so hurriedly the home of Mistress Boggs, he hurried back to Blue Bottle Court, where, after plunging the brass pin deep into the cushion and leaving it there, "straightening himself out," hanging his cloak upon the peg—for as the day advanced the weather grew warmer, and it interfered with handling easily the gatherings—feeding dearie and adjusting the sack while sipping some cold tea—there was no time to warm it—and tasting between the sips snatches of bread, cheese, and a pork pie he had bought of a small boy whom he saw standing wistfully at the intersection of Cross-Cut Lane and Chapel Street—this boy's face, so honest and manly, yet withal having a pinched look as if pain were tugging at his heartstrings, still looked out of every morsel that the Little Man handled,—he thus addressed himself:

"There's another wrong come to light. I smell it to day, and I smelled it yesterday and day before. The Great Chimney is very foul, and one can't breathe well. Ha! ha! how it snorts and puffs! how it wants to throw it off, but it can't, so it blows and worries. When Great Heart and I have done our work and we are not so hurried, we will go to the green fields and stay. But the Great Chimney will still stuff itself foul and then snort over it. Well, well, I've no time to fret over it; but still there's wrong come to light. I bought this of a boy—he's been happier than he is now. He ain't hungry, because he can eat a pie now and then, and very good eating it is too"—he snapped a juicy piece—"he's hungry in his heart, I think. Maybe somebody's wronged him. I'll go that way to my gatherings. Let me see if I can. I've been without method this morning; now I must mix

method and time again. I think it is time I made my quarterly visit to Lady B——. She doesn't like the gatherings to get very high ; good gatherings they are, too. I pay her a large price. Why ? because she gives it to the poor—and she does it too, for I've seen many a sad face smile when she came in sight. Yes, I'll go there, that takes me by the blind man. I'll tell him, and then Great Heart will be sure to know where we saw the Trout swimming this morning. Then I'll go by the boy whose heart isn't easy ; then I'll gather. That's method. Good by, dearie." He pushed into the cupboard the remains of his lunch, swept the crumbs into the fire, and was gone.

He went to Lunley Lane, but the blind man and Rover were not to be seen. A little troubled, he continued on to Cross-Cut Lane, and the boy was not to be seen.

"I knew the Great Chimney was foul," he muttered. "I knew it. I'll go on to Lady B——'s."

After Mr. Trout, well satisfied with the impression he must have made upon Miss Ray, and enjoying immensely the impression she had made upon him, left Chapel Street, he hesitated, and likewise meditated : I must expedite matters, but I don't want Marplot's help, and I won't have it. She can prove herself heiress of Ivandale, and if she can't I can ; but that's not enough. What Marplot says I don't believe. Stay—there's a man called upon me one morning—honest, too, he was. I thought then I didn't want anyone so honest in this affair ; but just here he will fit exactly. He knows something about the questionable papers. I must find him. First I will go around by the Wilton and see our friend the blind man. He told me he never confused footsteps. I'm sure he wouldn't confuse Marplot's with any other man's. I don't want him to visit Miss Ray, and I mustn't ask if he does ; so I'll hire this poor fellow to listen. 'Pon my word, I thought he looked at me that day as I left him. Well, if he can see, so much the better. Let me look for the card my honest caller left me if I should need his services." He drew from a side pocket of his coat a small case, and out of that a card, and read, "If my services are needed, notify the blind mendicant at the corner of Lunley Lane. Wallace." He was astonished. He had not read the

card when it was handed him, supposing it was simply a name; and not thinking he should need the man, as he was honest, had hastily thrust it into a receptacle for the many such that he daily received.

Thus doubly anxious to see the mendicant, he quickened his pace to the Wilton, and along the Wilton to the Lane; but the corner showed no blind man and no dog. It differed not a whit now from the other corners.

Disappointed, he turned toward his office.

When Joe stepped from Mrs. Mutter's door, his sole purpose was to step to the corner of the Wilton and Lunley as soon as a rapid walk would take him there. He said to himself, "I cannot see Mr. Wallace, but I will send him word that I have seen Miss Ray, and tell the rest to-night. Let me see, the true Margaret should have, probably, slender form, and surely dark hair, black eyes, fresh complexion, be quick in speech, ready in wit, kind and so charitable as to often be deceived. As to the kind and charitable I can't say, but the rest I am sure answers—all except the dimple—that is the greatest proof, and she has not got it—unless not having one to match it, she fills it with something."

Of course Joe would be puzzled to tell just what that something might be, yet he had a vague idea that ladies, even when as pretty and fresh as spring blossoms, would cover a blemish with some artful device.

"That's the way I account for it. I hope she is the one, because she is sweet and pretty, and, I feel quite sure, kind and charitable. I said I didn't care if the lawyer did go there again, and stay just as long, and longer too; but I think of it now, she may be the one, and anyhow, that is too good bait for him."

Brisk steps soon brought him to the corner of the Lunley. He found the Lane had not gone, but the blind man had. How cheerily, despite the sad surroundings, would have beat, for the moment, the heart of Susan Thump, had she known that she had that morning disappointed three not of her own sex.

That night Joe took the staff Mr. Wallace gave him when they began their journey—his journey to business, fame, and fortune—turned the key in the door, stepped

down the narrow stairway leading into the sitting-room behind the shop of Boggs & Co. A customer held the presence and attention of Mistress Boggs, so that Hiram was left alone, but not at rest. The dishes from the recently finished meal told the task to be done. He was just lifting the kettle from the swinging hook over the fire as Joe lifted the latch from the hasp and swung open the door. Hiram's gradual retreat that morning as fast as an advance was made by the trio gave him little chance to catch a fair view of the new lodger; it had been a subject of thought all day, whether this man would drop him now and then, on the sly of course, a word of comfort, as Isaac had always done. Sometimes it was only "Come and see me Hiram," sometimes it was "Poor Boggs!" Sometimes, if Mistress Boggs were within hearing—and it took a good distance to get her out of it—it would be only a sigh, but he always knew it was for him. Such a comfort it was to see that bent, spry figure with the red sack striding up Cross-Cut Lane, even if he did not exchange with it anything beyond a civil morning greeting.

It was the desire of his life to visit Harold, although he did not know exactly the route to the Blue Bottle, and there seemed little probability that his ideas would ever be more clear upon it, unless, as he dare not hope, the new lodger might so work himself into favor with Mistress Boggs that her consent might be gained; but such was only to be thought of when she had made a particularly good bargain with the mantua-maker in disposing of the cast-aside finery that had been gathered by the Little Man, or when she had had an especially large number of sales in the shop, and could shake her pocket, or jingle her money-box. So Hiram had two things to hope for from the new lodger, comfort—not alleviation, nothing but death to himself or Mistress Boggs, he had long assured himself, could bring that—comfort and a visit to Harold. One look at the good honest face of Joe, and tears sprang to the eyes of Hiram. He let the kettle drop, and fortunately it fell back upon the hook. Joe walked quickly across the room, for he knew by the voice from the shop that he might speak as he had promised Isaac he would, a word of cheer, took Hiram's hand

and said softly, "I am your friend. Let me help you when I can."

It was a little hand that met Joe's, but it was a grateful one. The call from the shop, "Hiram! look in the area; a cat!" told them both that the sound, not the words, assuredly, had caught the quick ear of Mistress Boggs.

"Yes," returned Hiram meekly, and closed upon himself the little door into the next, the outer room that led to the area.

Joe walked independently through the shop, bid the lady within it not to turn the bolt till his return, which might be soon, and might be late. The pay in advance made nothing he might ask the least trouble; so she smilingly assured him that it made no difference at what hour he came, the door would always be left so that his key would open it.

He found Mr. Wallace at Jericho looking weary, troubled, and pacing up and down the room, which would have been called a waiting-room, if there had ever been anyone to wait in it.

"Ah! Joe," he exclaimed, extending his hand and coming forward as the door opened, "glad to see you. News so soon?"

"No, sir, not exactly news." And he detailed the going to the house of Boggs & Co., the seeing of the lawyer, and his own visit to No. 40 Chapel Street.

"Well done! well done, honest Joe!" replied Mr. Wallace while his brow lost a little of the perplexed frown. "The mark is not there?"

"No, sir, it is not; yet she is pretty and good and all the rest, but—the hair a little light, Mr. Wallace."

"Well, Joe, I am satisfied. Now, your life for some time may be very monotonous, but are you still satisfied? Marplot I do not think will see her, but if he should, let me know. If Trout's visits are very frequent, let me know through the blind man at the corner of Lunley and the Wilton, for you may not find me here when you call. Draw from him whatever you need, by week or month as you please."

Joe assured him that he was content for the present

to watch and wait, although to a man of his active habits a more stirring life was preferable.

"Do not fear; it shall come, Joe: fame and fortune—fame and fortune after business." And Mr. Wallace ordered glasses of the ale for which Jericho would have been far more celebrated if more had known and once tasted it. They emptied, re-filled, and emptied again, then Joe took up his staff for a return to Cross-Cut Lane. Mr. Wallace and the dog went with him till the road was less lonely and the passers more frequent, when they bade him good night—the dog with a bound upon his shoulder and lap upon his cheek, the master with a kindly and hearty pressure of the hand.

CHAPTER XV.

TOM BARLEY SLEEPS, WAKES, AND SLEEPS AGAIN.

THE day had been eventful to all whose history we are recording, and perhaps, in its way, no more eventful to the rest than to Mr. Tom Barley.

When he awakened that morning, not with the sun nor soon after, it first occurred to him, and after arousing, it was some time in occurring, so hazy was his perception, that his mattress was unusually hard, and not at all springy, as a good mattress should be; so he turned upon it, and being nearer its edge than he thought, rolled into a hollow, which could in no wise be called "Sleepy Hollow," for it was padded with lumps of earth, and tufted with weeds, which were on the defensive and met him with needle-like points, which if Mr. Barley had been wide awake, would have been known to him as thistles.

Not finding the mattress as he thought it should be, he felt for the pillow, and grasped a worm-eaten board that had dropped from the place it once held in the old house near by. It broke, but that was not what a good pillow should do: it should bend, not break; so he tried for the covering, and drew up only fog. As he was con-

scious that there was enough of that over him before, he did not draw twice. To solve these freaks of the mattress, the pillow, and the coverings, he found required more wit than he could just then command; so there seemed nothing else for Mr. Tom Barley to do but to go to sleep again, which he did.

There was a house not far from him which was known to a certain class of people who did not bear an enviable reputation, as the "Catch 'em Alive." It took the innocent and unsuspecting in. And if they were not pugilistic after they found themselves in, they never met with bodily harm; they were only helped by a charming beverage into the "Land of Nod," whence they issued with pockets turned inside out, to find themselves some distance from where they were when they entered the above, often with the dawn just breaking in the horizon, but light not so readily breaking upon them as to where they were, or where they should be.

Ralph Speeder, no doubt, had this house in his mind when he led the tipsy Barley into its neighborhood, for he did little at hap-hazard: nature had made him artful and Marplot's lessons and example had made him not a whit the less cunning. If Barley missed anything, its disappearance could be readily accounted for, as there could scarcely be found an honest man in the region he would find himself in when he should be sober enough to look about him.

When Ralph left him he rolled him out of the way of the passer-by, and in his drunken dreams he had rolled himself still more out of the way, and at every roll he grew to look more and more like a heap of dirt; so it is readily to be accounted for why he slept undiscovered till he again felt the mattress lumpy, the pillow inflexible, and the coverings gone. But instead of the fog, the sun was upon him, and being less dense, he could not so readily draw it over him when he reached for a beam which fell across his feet. The mattress annoyed him the most, for its tufts were full of twinges, not of conscience, but of the flesh: whenever he moved they stung as if to make him get up or roll off them, they didn't care which so long as they got rid of him; and so

persistently d d they sting and pry into his face, his neck and his hands, that he was obliged to gather himself together and sit up. This he did, but the first attempt resulted only in so far accomplishing this, as could be done by resting upon one elbow and inquiring for "M-i-s-tress Ba-r-l-e-y."

Neither that imaginary person or anyone who was not imaginary having appeared, he fell back upon the tufts, murmuring "M-o-u-l-d, m-o-n-e-y, sm-e-ll m-o-u-l-d."

Concerning the money, he did not again speak till sometime after, when his brain was clearer. He did not rest long, for the tufts seeing that by perseverance he could be thrown off, began again to pry him; so he sat fairly and squarely up this time, looked about him and for the first time began to realize that he had been beastly drunk, and was just getting sober. Our readers, we know, have never found themselves as Mr. Tom Barley found himself, and we trust they never will; but if they have ever watched anyone who has thus found himself, they will see that when he can sit up, look about, and have some just idea of the states called drunk and sober, that he has fairly started on the road to the latter; and thus it was with Barley. So the longer he sat up the more sober he grew, and the more delighted the tufts were with the result of their persistency, for they bounded back on their stalks, the stalks bounded back to their places, and when he next looked behind and around him, the mattress was a bed of erect thistles. The first thing he needed was his hat. This lay at some distance, but he was so befogged that he thought it might be reached with little exertion; so he put out his hand—the child reached for the moon—it was utterly beyond the power of Tom Barley to get that hat, and it was beyond his power of comprehension to see why he could not. He would have rested again upon the mattress, but when he leaned a little the tufts, now upright, began again to pry and prod, to remind him that they did not want him, so he sat up again.

And a most pitiable sight was poor Tom Barley. He was weak in the eyes, and the sun was looking him square in the face. He saw his hat, and could not get it; he was

tired and dare not lay himself back; he was weak in the legs, and he could not get up and get home.

It being in order nowadays to account for all things, let the philosopher answer this: Why is it that a man can be sickened by a medicine, and though it bring relief from pain and make him well, it will nauseate him ever after by its sight; while a man can be sickened in body and mind, muddled in brain, bleared in vision, bedraggled in dress, bereft of a hat and bereft of his legs, jeered at by all the gamins, rolled out of the way by the indifferent because he has, not by compulsion, but of his own free will, pulled the cork, tipped the bottle, and swallowed a draught—yes, many draughts—which will, he knows, do all this; and that same bottle re-filled, will after he has been sober a reasonable or rather an unreasonable length of time, hold such a charm for him that he uncorks, tips again, only to meet more sickening, more muddling, more blearing, more bedraggling, more bereaving, more jeering, more rolling; and still again.—Why is it?

Mr. Barley had a few thoughts of the past, but they were vague, the vaguest of which was why he found himself now and then calling for Mistress Barley? He was unable to settle the matter and gave it up. Next he thought of the present; then his ideas began to be more clear, the chief among them being that he could not sit there much longer, that he dare not lie down; and hence there was nothing left for him to do but to try and get up. He stretched out his hand and arm to reach for his leg, and was more successful than when he reached for his hat. He moved it, for from the feeling he was not sure that it still held an attachment to his body; but deciding soon that it did, he moved the other, the decision for the continued possession of that was also favorable, and he drew them both up, pushed them down, and after repeating this drawing and pushing several times, he at last ventured to work himself off the mattress on to firmer, fairer ground, where he could rest without being pried and prodded.

In resting he fell asleep, and as the sun grew warmer and brighter, it seemed to warm and brighten Mr. Barley, mentally as well as physically, so that when he again

awakened he was able to take his bearings with some degree of understanding. And having done this, strange to say, he forgot the past and the present, and he only thought of the immediate future; and in that future he saw a hand: it was not slender, nor tender, yet it belonged to a woman. It was hard, large, muscular, one of those hands that grasp firmly, and shake warmly, but what it thus grasps and shakes is a—coat collar! And is it any wonder he saw the hand with fear, especially when he was so weak, or knew he would be when he got on his feet, that he could not walk away from it?

It was owned proudly and wielded strongly by Polly Barley—"Sister Polly" and "Brother Tom," they said to each other when a third party was present or within hearing. But it has been slyly whispered that, suspecting all was not actually so placid as it seemed, the third party had often stolen softly back and heard what we will not now relate; but it is sufficient to say that one would have no thought of Polly being the sister of Tom, or of Tom being the brother of Polly.

From the slight hint we have given of the power with which her hand could, and often did grasp Tom's coat collar, the reader may judge that her tongue was muscularly developed in proportion, and that she could grasp a subject with it quite as readily.

To return to poor Tom. It is no wonder that he saw the hand, the arm, the whole figure, and soon began to feel the shake; and it is well his imagination had such play, for it shook him upon his feet. His joints were stiff, the knee-joints the only ones which were not; and if they only would stiffen like the rest, he could get that hat he longed for to keep the sun from staring and glaring at him so mercilessly.

He stepped—or thought he would—when his legs doubled like a jointed foot-rule, and he was down. The hand and its shake spurred him on to try again, and this time he stood longer. The knees were a trifle stiffer, and when they began to weaken again, he knew it in time and sat down. He rested long enough then to again take bearings and know about where he was; and the hand all the time getting larger, the grasp firmer, and the shake warmer, he

got up and walked. He repeated this operation until he had, at last, the hat in his hand; and the exertion to get it upon his head was almost as great as to get it in his hand. He waited until he thought his arm pretty steady, and took aim. The hat and the hand came down on the right shoulder like a lump of lead, and threatened to throw him off his equilibrium, so great was the shock. Again he rested, and when he considered it safe, tried again. This time it struck plump upon his ear. He saw that the hat was gaining ground, so he continued aiming till it struck where he could draw its broad brim over his eyes. It was a sorry hat: muddy, crushed in where it ought to project, and projecting where it ought to hollow, only so much of it on as it could not help—it seemed ashamed of itself and ashamed of its owner, who while aiming and missing aim so many times, felt the hand was fading, the grasp and the shake growing feeble, so without them to threaten, without the tufts to pry, began to feel happy and so comfortable that he drew up his knees, hugged them tenderly, laid down his head and snored so loudly that Isaac Harold, who was hurrying by on a short cut to see what gatherings Lady B—— might have piled up for him, stopped—although there was little time for stopping when so much was to be done—listened, looked and saw the doubled-up figure, hurried up to it, walked all about it, first to make sure whether it was man or beast—for, although it wore a hat its hair was matted and dusty; although it wore a coat, it was so rumpled and the rumples were so filled with mud; although it seemed to have a skin, it was so scratched with the tufts and grimed with dirt, that had it not been for the loud and regular snores, he might have thought it some crouching beast who had burst its cage at some country show.

After looking it well over, he deemed it safe to draw near, and fortunately for him—for it saved time—he touched Mr. Barley first upon his coat collar, and as this was his tender part, he was awake as soon as he could be, under the circumstances. And thinking, of course, that the hand of Polly was upon him, he seemed to nerve himself for the shake that would follow, and looked as courageous as a licked cur. He waited, but the shake not following the

grasp, he ventured to look up ; and seeing the oddity before him with clearer vision than he had yet seen anything—for, of course, the more sober he became, the better he could see—he exclaimed, "The devil!" but looked relieved. It was evident he feared him less than the owner of the large hand.

"Ha ! ha ! that's good," observed the Little Man ; "but you have made a mistake, my friend. I am not the devil, but I know some people who are dear friends of his, and will live with him some day. Now who are you, and what are you doing here ? You needn't be afraid to tell me, for I say again, I ain't the gentleman you speak of, and I don't want you."

This last he added when he saw Barley look suspiciously at his sack.

"Now, I say, who are you ?"

"Barley, sir, Barley ; I'm Barley," replied the man of that name.

"Ha ! ha ! good again," said Isaac. "I see, I see, a corned Barley—no, a Barley corned ; ha ! ha !" he laughed long and loud. "I wasn't stupid to think of that now, was I ? While you're straightening up, friend, I'll straighten out, so ; and if you could do it, you'd be sober in a twinkle."

As he uttered the last sentence, he laid down his sack, laid his hat upon it, stretched out his arms, turned his palms outward, and having selected a smooth piece of ground, not many feet square, said again, "So !"

What wonder that Mr. Tom Barley looked about to make sure he was yet in London. And, indeed, if he had not recognized well the particular locality of London in which he found himself upon awaking, he would have been still doubtful, notwithstanding the Little Man's declaration about his own identity. As it was he lost at once the sense of security he felt upon being sure of still abiding in that town, when he saw, one instant, the head of the Little Man where his heels ought to be, and the next his heels where his head had been ; and the transition grew so rapid that he saw head and heels at the same time. Then it occurred to him, still in that vague sense that everything had in the last few hours, that the devil could not find a fitter

place to begin recruiting his hosts than London would prove. If his suspicions were well founded, there was no use trying to escape; so he awaited the result, consoling himself that he might be better treated than if he stayed on earth, and met Polly, who was, no doubt, now on the watch for him. His worldly possessions she could claim, and not mourn a bit because she could claim them.

As he was still somewhat misty in mind, it took to think all this as long as it took Harold to straighten out; so coming out even, the one with his thoughts and the other with his somersaults, they waited to see what next was to be done.

The Little Man picked up his hat, put it on his head, replaced his sack on his back and waited. Tom supposing he was giving him time—very considerate too in the devil, he thought—to make preparations for a journey in the sack, shook some of the dirt from his clothes, and put his hat under his arm, lest it might drop out as they travelled, then waited.

There was no more time to be lost, so Harold said,

"Do you want to go home?" at the same time he swung the sack off his back for some needful adjusting to make it feel easier.

Barley, supposing this sealed his fate, and that the less resistance he made the better it would be for him after his master got him home, said, trying his best to make a bow, "I feel honored, sir."

"Ha! ha! I don't know why you should. I'm only a gatherer. Come, I'll see you so near home that you can find the way easy. I must not waste any more time, friend. There's so much to do and so little time to do it, that one can't be lazy. I'm promised some fine gatherings; so come, stir yourself, I must be off."

As Harold said this, he still held the open sack in his hand, and it began to look quite inviting to Barley, especially when he found it a much more difficult feat than he had anticipated to step, even to the sack, so he said meekly, "I'm ready, sir, quite ready."

By this time he was near enough to begin a series of ducks for the open mouth. He either did not take good aim, or in taking it grew nervous and so he lost,

for at every duck he hit the Little Man, but did not hit the sack.

At last he looked up despairingly, and said, "May I go in feet foremost?"

"In where?" asked Isaac, much perplexed at the cause of the ducking and the inquiry. Barley as much perplexed pointed to the sack in reply.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Isaac, "good again. Do you think I'm going to carry you? I said I'm a gatherer, I know, but I didn't say I gathered your kind o' cloth. What would I do with you, eh?"

"I thought," replied Barley, "you said you'd see me home—your home didn't you mean?"

"My home! What do I want of tipsy folks in my home, and nobody but dearie to look after things all day long. You wouldn't mind dearie, and the Blue Bottle swings too close by. Oh, no; you don't know who I am, do you? You don't understand. I mean, you know you ain't quite yourself yet."

"Why, why," said Barley, drawing back from the mouth of the sack with disappointment, for he felt the firm hand again if this resort failed, as it now seemed likely to. "I—I—thought you were the—the—the devil," he whispered; and as he did so, the fumes from his breath would, no doubt, greatly have delighted that far-famed individual, had he stood where Isaac Harold stood, and inhaled them.

"Good! good!" roared the latter, dropping the sack; "how many good things I find in your company! That's so good I must double up;" and he did, till his long nose was between his knees, while he roared and chuckled. When he could not roar, and was too tired to chuckle, he hee, heed.

"That's so good, now, I must straighten out again, so." And while making ready with arms and palms, he continued, "I see you thought I was going to make off with you in my sack, ha! ha! ha!" and head and heels came up alternately again.

"Now, just try it," he cried, balancing himself on his hands, while his pointed shoes looked aloft; "just try it. If I ever get drunk, that is the way I shall sober myself in

a twinkling. It always makes me feel better. If I'm sick, it makes me well. If I'm in trouble, it's all gone after a few like these;" and up and down he went again.

Poor Barley! The gyrations made him dizzy, and if the sack had been open no doubt he would have ducked again with better aim, for he thought he was reassured that it was the devil making game of him.

Between his uncertainty regarding this individual, and the certainty regarding the shake that was growing warmer and warmer every moment, he did not know what to do, having no bottle to uncork, tip up, and once more drown his troubles. The Little Man soon ended his perplexity by a final pirouette, which brought his feet firm on the ground and his head aloft, putting on his hat and sack, taking Barley's arm, and saying decidedly, "Time's up! time's up! Where do you live?"

"In Cheatem Street, sir," replied Tom, still trembling and fearing as to what disposition was to be made of him.

"Ha! ha! another good thing. Are you the Barley—Tom Barley—kind, good, generous Tom Barley, who is so sorry for the hard up who come to him, that he always gives more than the things are worth? He is very kind this Tom Barley is. I know just where he lives. He has a sister Polly; yes, I know Polly Barley! Time's up!"

In and out, up and down the streets that separated the vicinity of the Catch 'em Alive from the house of Polly Barley which caught 'em any way it could, they went till they reached the corner of Cheatem Street, where Isaac, pointing to the house, let go of his arm.

Tom tried to thank him, and perhaps did, for the Little Man said, "No matter, no matter," and stepped just a foot or two back, where he could see without being seen.

Tom thought himself strong while he leaned upon Isaac, but when left to himself he reeled and tottered, perhaps as much from dread as from lack of stimulants. He drew nearer and nearer, and when he sank upon his own step, the Little Man saw a head withdraw from the window of the second floor, heard a sharp clashing of the sash and sill, the street door open suddenly, saw a hand,

large and strong, extended till it was on a line with Barley's coat collar, descend, grasp it firmly, and lifting him up, as one would a puppy, shake him warmly but never weakening in her hold, swing him into the house.

"Poor Tom!" said the Little Man, as he hurried away. "I haven't seen him for many a day. And Polly, ha! ha! I knew she'd serve him up that way. I sometimes think it's quiet living with dearie, but it's peaceful, and when there's so much to do there's no time to bicker."

He had known them when he began his life in London years before. Then the golden balls swung, or looked as if they might swing from before the door; but now Polly was looking up in the world, she had abolished them, and become a — we shall see. But nevertheless loans were made in a small back room with a green cambric curtain cutting off a corner for inspection of what was to be advanced upon. Upon certain hours the poor beings needing the loans had to come in by an alley and a rear entrance, and no doubt they liked that way the better. It certainly seems more natural than to openly acknowledge one's self, by the front, beaten in pocket, and so almost beaten in life.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE COTTAGE IN LUNLEY LANE.

THE house to which Samuel was borne on the night of his rescue, the room in which he was adopted by Miss Thump and christened by the Rev. Josiah Peerie, were not the house and the room Susan now called home. Then she occupied as unpretentious a house as the Lane could offer, yet it was neat, wholesome, and had an air about it that said, "Come in, come in; you will never catch my mistress in a flurry—never mind when you call." Everything seemed to be in order, and yet not so exact but that everything might get out of order and yet not annoy in the least the lady who was the head, the feet, the hands, and everything necessary to keep this home so in-

viting to herself, to Samuel, to the neighbors, and to friends.

Of the last she held a generous list. It included everybody on the Lane and everybody off the Lane who had ever known her as she really was. A brief acquaintance with Susan Thump under aggressive circumstances, as when she first met Rover, might lead one to pronounce her whimsical, like many maidens of her years. But the face was too plump, round, and rosy ; the eyes, although sharp and discerning, too mild when at rest ; the hands too steady, when strength and firmness were required ; the feet too ready and willing to run for the needy to belong to a whimsical person. She had no living relatives, and for this she had many years been giving thanks. No one had the right to say, "Susan Thump, why do you this?" or, "Susan Thump, why do you that?" So when Samuel dropped into her heart just as naturally as he had dropped into her arms, she had no one to care and provide for, except now and then some hapless soul, whom she either nourished by her tea—it was not rose-flavored then, but still was as good as she drank herself—and toast moistened with good butter, or by delicacies which were not costly to the giver, but rare to the receiver and soothed its convalescent hours till it had renewed strength and gained courage enough to take up the staff again, or gently, tenderly helped it to the brink of that river it must cross alone and be welcomed on the other shore according to its work here—just which of these offices she should perform nature, and not Susan of course decided. So what wonder that Samuel slipped into a void in her heart and a void in her home?

She had a small income, whose principal was left by an old uncle, for whom, it was whispered, Susan had remained single. However that may be, we do know that she nursed him patiently for many years, and when he was gone she found that he had rewarded her as best he could—had left her all he had. After settling with the doctor and the undertaker, and paying a few small debts, she counted her available funds and found their interest would supply her modest wants, and hers alone. But this would not do for a nature so active. She must have

work for her heart and work for her hands. The former went out to the poor and needy in kindness and sympathy, the latter must supply the substantials. She knew kindness alone would not take the place of bread, and well wishing would not bring them coals. So she resolved that what she earned should be all given where it seemed most needed. And thus it was that she became a nurse, monthly, weekly, daily or hourly, according to the depth of the patient's pocket—and many, many times she nursed when the pocket had no depth in fact, when there was no pocket at all; but then she knew she was giving and doing good, and she watched, trotted, fondled, and soothed just as tenderly. Many a little eye has looked wistfully into her cheery face and been quite reconciled to the coming, after the love, the light, and the joy it read therein. From this special nursing she began to be called upon for all cases, from croup to consumption, from sudden to lingering; and then when the demise came, what more natural than that Miss Thump should take charge of all matters pertaining to a well-ordered funeral?

At a marriage she was just as ready, but it was remarked by some, that she then wore a sadder face than at a birth or a funeral, and that she arranged the bride's dress with less satisfaction than she wrapped the soft flannel and dainty cambric around the newly arrived, or laid the flowers about the form of the lately departed. She tried to let no one see this, but she often said to herself, "When they are born and when they die, Susan knows what is before them, but when they are married, it so often happens that they wish that they had *never* seen the light or were about to close their eyes on it."

So it was that Susan ofttimes was wanted at the same moment in several places, but invariably the poorest had her preference.

After Samuel was hers beyond a doubt, she did not go out so often, and never to remain overnight unless the case was urgent.

Her time had been so much employed in the years intervening between the death of her uncle and the coming of Samuel, that her income had for some years been untouched, so it had been used to swell the principal, and

both now afforded means for Samuel's support. She taught him all her small stock of learning in his earlier childhood; she clothed him warmly in health, and nursed him tenderly in sickness; she sent him to school later, and bought for him whatever talent called for or genius suggested.

Had he well repaid her? His first earnings after he entered the office of S. S. Trout he laid as proudly in her lap as if they had been a hundred pounds. She recognized at once the boy's tender feeling and knew she must not refuse them, so with tears and thanks they became hers.

"For a new dress," Samuel said, "and to be made by a mantua-maker, too." So it was bought and made and kept for wearing when Susan passed more milestones, the next most important of which was when, after serving faithfully the stipulated time, Samuel entered into partnership with S. S. Trout.

When the first case he won was amply paid for, his head was even more proudly poised as he laid these his larger earnings in Mother Susan's lap, and said, "For a home; the little cottage on the Lane nearer the Wilton is for sale, and you must buy it. The yard in front you will soon have blooming. The pretty parlor opens on the porch; there you must sit and watch the flowers growing."

"And your coming," interrupted Susan as she wiped away the tears.

"Yes, that you will do, I know," said he, smoothing the yet fair brow and toying with a little gray curl that escaped from beneath the cap-border. "And a maid you must have, or you will not have time to watch for the flowers and for me."

And so they left the old house and were happy in the little cottage Susan had often wished she could own. When they moved, the shopmen moved first—carpets with hangings and furniture to match, pretty china and glass for the table, books for Samuel and easy seats for Susan; and there we found her when Meg rapped, the morning after the river had refused to hold any longer its dead.

No one thought of envying Susan her good luck. Not

a Lunley, however humble, but was taken through the new home from top to bottom; not a friend but sipped from the new china the fragrant tea that Susan drew from the bright urn which reflected her happy face, and which was filled and re-filled many times for days after the removal.

Samuel closed his musty books, folded his papers many times during those few days and peeped in to see if the stock of bread, meat, cheese, or cake was getting low, or if Mother Susan needed anything he had not ordered. This was his ostensible errand, but he really came to look at the cheery little body who had been to him, it might be, more than his own mother could or would have been; he came to be happy in seeing her happy. If anyone congratulated her upon the son she had reared, she would reply, "Humph!" but it was tremulous, "Susan Thump only did her duty, and Samuel was good. If he had not been good Susan would have done her duty the same, but she could not have made him what he is now."

In the long days which followed when Samuel was attending to his business, the maid performing the labors of the household, the flowers budding, blossoming and climbing, Susan was left much to her own thoughts, and as she knitted and rocked they sometimes ran like this: "A father would grow old and look to me for care and comfort; a brother would long ago have others to support, and I should be helping him to care for them; a husband—Humph! I never did believe in them, and I never knew but one man who would make a good husband. A son would have said, she is my mother and I must care for her. Blood does not bind Samuel to me, duty does not make him good to me. It is love and gratitude. I am the happiest mother in the kingdom. Susan Thump did her duty and Susan Thump has been rewarded." Then would follow a recounting to herself of the alarm, the hurry, the awe at the sight. The leap up the ladder, the step—she never could remember how she came down, it seemed but one step. The half dead child soothed from its fright, healed of its wounds, coaxed and petted till it saw there was a lone heart that needed

it, a pair of arms outstretched to it, and a home for it here on earth. The christening and adoption, the cake and the mild beverage that moistened it, the words of the Rev. Peerie, "As pure as the crystal drops"—and his life had been as pure, she knew, as mortal's could be. The past brought not a shadow, the present was fairest sunshine, but the thought of the future deepened the lines, filled the eyes and made the knitting needles click sharply. She could not expect him to always find in her what his heart demanded. He had grown very thoughtful of late—yes, the clear sky was hazy now and then, and she watched him when he did not know it. He had many friends but they were not known to her. Not that he was ashamed of his mother or his home. No, indeed! but they were not near, and were young people of more pretentions than the Lunleys, so she had not met them. There was one she knew could make him happy and herself too; but Samuel had high notions, though good sense with them, so she did not dare hope for that. Sometimes the flowers seemed to nod tauntingly at her, as if to say, "We are old-fashioned marigolds, larkspurs, and china-asters. How long do you think a pretty young mistress would let us blossom here? How long before the sun would be burning our roots instead of opening our petals?" So Susan was troubled, but did not let Samuel know it. Sometimes she would toss her head and say, "Humph! if she don't like me and I don't like her, I can move back and live by myself. I'm not poor, and many a door would open to Susan Thump, if she did not want to live alone."

But Samuel never suspected these forebodings of Mother Susan, for when her heart grew too heavy, she donned shawl, bonnet, and gloves, and paid either a social call or carried some of the many garments that she made to the needy ones she knew were waiting for them. Then the clouds parted and the sky soon wore the clearest blue. There was work to do, and she was happy again. The hungry to feed, the cold to warm, the sick to nurse; and she with time, strength, and means to do all this, what right had she to murmur?

And so they had lived for nearly two years in the

pretty cottage. And were they both content? No. Happiness here is alloyed. Will the soul ever find it unalloyed in the hereafter? Will there be longings and strivings, shadows to fear and regrets to torment, even when the soul has been tried and found fitted for the higher and nobler realms of spirit-life? But the present and not the future was the all-important with Susan and Samuel. He longed for another in their home, and she feared every day lest he should say, "Mother Susan, you have long had a son whom you have loved faithfully; for his sake will you share that love with a daughter?"

But it came not, for Pride and Love were at strife. Pride said, "Your face is fair, your breeding good. You do not know your birth, to be sure, but good blood must course through your veins, and—"

"And how do you know," interrupted Love, "but just as good she may claim—it might be better," it added slyly.

"But you run a risk," said Pride; "there are those whom you are certain of. And now the Lane—let us talk of that. S. M. Thump, counsellor-at-law, Lunley Lane, is well enough; but S. M. Thump, gentleman, Lunley Lane, will not do. You have a good income, and it increases; you have a fair name, and every case shows it fairer and better known. Now, why not—"

"Break up the pretty home, and break Mother Susan's heart?" broke in Love.

Pride could not reply to this.

Thus was Mr. Thump listening, the morning Meg called upon Susan, Mr. Trout upon Miss Ray, Joe and Isaac upon Mistress Boggs, and Susan, Isaac, Mr. Trout and Joe upon the blind man. Susan had called first; she was never known to be too late in any matter whether grave or trivial, and in this she was never more seasonable, and for it the blind man and Rover will be thankful to the end of time.

CHAPTER XVII.

"I NEVER 'OOKED UN IN LIKE 'ER."

THE little party avoided the larger streets, the busier thoroughfares. The walk was not a short one to the clear-sighted, but when one had no sight at all it was still longer, and thus gave time for much conversation, which did not displease Miss Thump. Yet by the time they had reached the morgue, and she had weighed the outgoings and incomings, the former were far heavier; and although she had not been much questioned, the blind man had counted the milestones of her life upon his fingers, had recognized her as a woman of ready heart, willing hand, quick wit, a full share of curiosity and an absorbent love, not of self, but of her son Samuel. And in displaying this kindness of heart, this goodness of soul, this unselfish love, she was rearing another milestone, the largest, the fairest, that had yet marked her course in life's journey. Its foundation nothing could ever move, for it was laid in love, cemented by a never-ending faith in a son and a daughter. Its steps, as it lifted itself to mark to the world its existence, she would climb one by one, just as she had once climbed round by round for Samuel; but now she would not descend, but climb on and on forever.

This she was laying, but knew it not, neither did the blind man, neither did Rover, who often looked questioningly at his master, who of course not seeing the look could not reply. Miss Thump saw it, and still suspicious of the whole canine race, and seeing no good reason why she should make an exception for this specimen of it, tossed her head with a "Humph! dogs should not be so prying," to which Rover shook his head, nature having deprived him of the power to toss it, as if to reply, "It's not a birth, ma'm, or my master and I would not be in attendance. It's not a marriage, for such he never attends either, and we don't look like a wedding party. Since it is neither of the two, and you are with us, I say it must be a funeral."

Susan watched him closely because she did not dare

do the same to the master; there was an understanding between them that puzzled her. She felt a vague sense of being led and not leading, as was always her part, yet the guiding was not unpleasant, and so they kept on. When in sight of the morgue the master stopped suddenly, the dog moved as if he would spring forward, the master checked him and checked himself also, but did not check Susan's curiosity, which only increased when she saw a figure skulk along as near the building as it could get. Its being there annoyed the man, and yet why should it, if he could not see? Sometimes he would hurry a little as if to overtake it; and the stick he carried showed the excitement into which such a determination threw him, for it struck the paved way at all possible angles, and wavered even in doing this.

The effect upon the string which held Rover to his master was not so perceptible, for he either partook of the nervousness largely and jerked the string himself, or he was anxious to bound away and follow his own inclinations in the matter—then he would move at so slow a pace that Miss Thump was several feet in the lead. She noted the figure and its effect upon the man and the dog. The first neared the morgue, then turned away; drew nearer next time and passed by; drew near again and entered. It came out wiping its forehead just as the last drew near also. Miss Thump pitied the figure. She thought it must be the hands were trembling from grief at some sad remembrance, and the handkerchief wiping away tears.

She had told the blind man of her errand. He had heard that the river had given up the fair, but not the frail dead; and in this he had felt only the interest and curiosity common to all. But the touching picture Susan drew of Meg's visit to the water, and her anxiety that some token, however slight, should be given of the tenderness the girl felt for the pure, sweet face that the muddy waters had laved for hours before its becoming the prize of Gaff and his father, visibly moved him. The old man said to the inspector with truth, "She be sweet and clean, as if we'd found 'er on the green grass. I never 'ooked un in like 'er."

And so leaving Rover without to watch, the two entered with a little group of women, sent there by idle curiosity.

The women gazed first, and, hardened as they were to such sights in the dead-house, their aprons were lifted to wipe away the tears that made clean paths down their grimed faces.

"I ken count 'em by tens," said one, "as I've seen in this same dead-'us, but I 'ope never again, to see one like that a layin' there."

"She looks as if she'd speak," said another.

"And a thousand pities she can't. She'd tell on some o' the big folks, I knows."

"Mebbe not. I see a man as was 'ere yesterday and looked, and come to day and looked, and shook, too, when he looked," remarked a third.

The blind man heard this, Susan heard it. Rover did not hear it, but he growled ominously, either from suspicion or because he found actual cause. However, it made the master uneasy, and he asked Miss Thump if she would be kind enough to see what troubled the dog. He ran the risk of incurring her displeasure, but there being no one else about, it was his only chance, and must be availed of. The figure drawn into, and expelled from the presence here, had so excited his suspicions that he said at once to himself, "Neither chance nor Miss Thump led me here."

As she turned to look at the dog without he turned and looked at the form within. He saw the face—he groped for support, for the room grew dark and things seemed sinking away from him; he caught at the railing, and held it with iron grasp. This effort revived him, and he looked again. There was no mistaking those clear cut features, the brow, the hair, the hand; as vision became clearer he looked more closely, and his hand would have crushed the railing, so powerful again grew its grasp, if it had not been so hard that no human hand, alone, could move it. His breath he held; his lips parted and closed after a moment with a low cry. It seemed to him that it filled the whole world, so deeply did it find an echo in his heart and he was frightened lest he

had betrayed himself. So drawing the dismal green things again over his eyes, he awaited Susan.

"Humph!" said she, "he's an uneasy dog. Just like all dogs, though. They fuss and fuss, and never know any more than he does what they're fussing about."

This was so low that no one heard it. For the blind man, with his quickened sense of hearing was listening to his own heart-throbs—throbs that told of defeat, anguish, revenge, and murmuring at the injustice of such defeat, then hope that it might be some other he had seen; the next throb was louder and quicker and crushed the hope, for the dimple was surely upon the face. No two of the throbs were alike and no two for the same emotion—the heart and its owner re-lived years in those few moments.

Miss Thump approached; the man did not question her concerning the dog, and she did not deem it a suitable subject to introduce herself. So she drew aside her veil and looked upon one whom even the waters had recognized as too innocent, too pure for them to hold; but they had brought her to the surface when there was none to see but the old man, Gaff, and the few stars whose beams struggled through the misty air to show that they were not ashamed to throw their feeble light about her.

The river's impurities had refused to cling even to her garments, they had passed on to some fitter subject. So Susan looked in silence, and, as a stranger passed near and gazed with unfeeling curiosity, she began to draw forth Meg's handkerchief as if to shield the face already. But the next moment she was alone again; and folding the delicate fabric, she was about to place it in the box, when a tear fell—from thy eye and from thy heart, good Susan—upon one corner. Brushing it away she felt something raised upon its threads, and looking closely beheld M. R. traced in embroidery with such stitches as would suit the web-like substance.

The blind man saw, but the heart did not throb: it bounded and leaped, as if it would break its bonds, but its owner must be still—and blind.

"Humph!" said she, turning to him, "somebody would steal this handkerchief. Does Meg think, poor

child, that they would have feeling enough to let it go with her? And the flowers too? Why somebody here would have 'em in the buttonhole of their coat before I'd been gone long. No, I don't see but one way to save 'em, and if you will wait here, mister, I'll go to the office and see if they are civil folks. You see how it is, there's no other way to keep 'em in the coffin with her. Folks will steal—and then—Samuel might have been born a girl, and I should have thought it a hard world, if somebody could'nt have arranged it so that the handkerchief and the flowers would be sure to go too. If this had happened to my daughter, to my Samuel born a girl, you know, sir, what I mean—and—and—" But a great sob smothered what would have followed the "and." Susan covered her eyes with her own less slender threaded handkerchief, drew her veil, and would not have mourned less heartily if Samuel had lain there. Then, with characteristic energy, she looked up after a few moments saying, "Humph! there is no use in this; I'll go and see if they're civil."

The little curl of gray was straightened with moisture, the handkerchief was rumpled and wet. She shook it out, and folded it as she left the master near the dead, the dog at the door, and passed into the office adjoining the morgue.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHAT CAME OF MISS THUMP'S FINDING THE OFFICIALS CIVIL.

THE Lane stood aghast.

Miss Thump had been seen walking hurriedly along an hour before accompanied by the mendicant and his dog. Mr. Thump had also been seen close upon the same hour walking along apparently to his noonday meal. To be sure, Miss Thump had told one of the Lane that morning that her son was suffering from headache; and as this fact, trivial in its start, became known, it was aug

mented to apoplexy, to heart disease, to congestion, to a thousand and one things in a few moments after the symbols of mourning appeared upon the cottage of Susan and Samuel.

The Lane could never eat till it knew the truth, so it appeared singly and in groups, with bonnets and without. To its anxious inquiry Susan appeared. Many had often wondered how she, who always conducted the sad preparations for others, would appear when she had to see another in her place ; but that was not thought of now. The Lane had a heart, and a kind one, too ; and it had always loved Susan Thump, for she had loved the Lane ; and now it was hers in sorrow and affliction. There must be sorrow, it reasoned, or there would be no symbols without to show that the voice of the passer-by might be hushed with propriety, and his step softened in respect.

When Susan appeared, and Samuel also, the Lane was still more perplexed ; yet it breathed more freely when it discovered that the signs of death were for neither. But with unabated curiosity it listened while Susan read the "Found Drowned," etc., from the Daily Bee, and added, "I went to lay a few flowers in her hand, and throw something over her face, if nobody claimed her, and I knew some one would steal both ; and I thought if Samuel had been born a girl—and so—" Her voice choked, the lump in her throat grew and would dissolve only in tears ; so the Lane heard no more, but it was content. "It was just like Susan Thump," it said, and asked softly, "What hour ?"

"Four o'clock," said Samuel, "and we will be glad to have you show respect also to the unknown and unclaimed. The Rev. Josiah Peerie will be here."

As the Lane turned back to finish its half-eaten dinner, relate the news and don its best before four o'clock, it saw, turning the corner of the Wilton, a peaked hat, short coat, velvet shorts, black stockings and pointed shoes, and beneath and within all these was Isaac Harold. He heeded not the Lane, and the Lane, thinking him a mere passer through, heeded not him. He walked directly toward the cottage, gently undid the latch, closed the gate, stepped softly along the path upon the porch, lifted the

knocker with respectful firmness, let it drop and awaited a reply. The maid came, Miss Thump was desired. A "Come in; I will call her," and Isaac Harold sat down in the cozy parlor of No. 8 Lunley Lane.

When Miss Thump appeared, which she did directly —she never lost time, which promptness raised her still higher in the estimation of her visitor, for where there was so much to do, who could afford to waste time?—he bowed low with his hat under his arm, and his body so much inclined one who knew him well would have said he was about to "straighten out." But he knew what to do and what not to do. The what to do was to make known as concisely and clearly as possible the object of his visit. The what not to do was to leave no clue by which Miss Thump should know by whom he was sent. Both of these he performed to the letter. After this bending of his flexible body, and remaining bent for some seconds, he straightened as other people would, not in somersaults, but stood erect. And so quickly did he come to a perpendicular, that anybody else would have been thrown off an equilibrium. But that was a hard matter to succeed with upon Isaac Harold—for mentally and physically he had long been, through trouble, off the even balance; morally and spiritually he was well poised. So, though he came up suddenly, he stood firmly, took his hat from under his arm, thrust the fist of one hand into its peak, as if desirous of preserving well its contour, and said, "This is Miss Thump, ma'm, is it?"

Miss Thump replied, "It is Miss *Susan* Thump."

Whenever she met a stranger, she was always particular that Susan should be boldly inserted between the Miss and the Thump, lest this Miss might be mistaken for an abbreviated Mrs.

"Yes," returned the Little Man, drawing from his pocket a small parcel; "I beg your pardon, ma'm," 'Miss Susan Thump, No. 8 Lunley Lane,'" and he handed it to her as he read its address.

"You will be kind enough to accept this, and ask me no questions, for what is in it is none of my business, and who sent it is none of yours, ma'm. I do not mean to be rude, but it is only the truth, it is none of your business.

If anybody wants to be kind, do let him be kind without prying him out. There's more folks, I find, ma'm, that don't want to be kind than that do, so those that do and want to be sly about it, just let 'em alone.

"For myself, ma'm, I'm a gatherer. If you should ever have any cast-off, or should ever need any to cast on to somebody who feels cold when it is frosty, and wet when it is rainy, leave word with the poor blind man and his dog who beg at the corner. They know me professionally, that is, as a gatherer; they know I pass their way often, so we help each other—we both gather—he what people can spare, and I what they don't need. That is who I am, ma'm; and as I say good day, might I ask if you object if I come to hear the prayer when it is time? I won't trouble you to decide at once, ma'm, but I will make so bold as to come to the door, and if you object the maid will tell me, and I will pass right on. There's so much to do in this world, and so little time to do it, that one is always in a hurry; so I will say good day again and be gone."

And he was gone before Susan could reply. The windows, of course, were well shaded inside and out on this occasion. So it required some deft fingering to be able to see out without exposing herself to the gaze of any passer-by. Therefore, by the time she had made an opening the Little Man was hurrying around the corner. So she turned back to the room, turned over the parcel, held it up to the light, pinched it, wondered what it could be, then took a pin from her dress, and began tearing it in the raggedest, jaggedest tears that one of her sex could, till she found a small box: the lid she took off, and two notes she took out, one was written, the other was not written, but its face testified that its value was twenty pounds, Bank of England. "Humph!" said she to herself, "did anyone ever know Susan Thump to be bought?" and the cap-ties fluttered with indignation. She was hurrying off to seek Samuel, when she thought of the other that was not a twenty-pound note, but was no doubt, in its way just as valuable, for it would tell what its companion could not—it would tell what it was sent for. With outraged feeling a little mollified, and yet with a toss of

the head which meant "Susan Thump never undertakes to do a thing that she don't see the end of before she makes a beginning—when she found the folks civil, she saw the end and didn't want anybody's help to see it either"—she opened the other: its face bore testimony to the following, in a bold, manly hand:

"Charity does not send this, for the writer knows it is not needed. He only asks that it be used to beautify the grave with flowers, such as we know *she* must have loved, and which Miss Thump knows well to select; and if anything can be laid with her—anything which would have been placed beside her if she had died at home, let this buy it. The flowers for the grave are to be growing ones. Trusting Miss Thump will think it no intrusion, I am,

"ONE WHO SAW HER AT THE MORGUE."

At first Miss Thump was not pleased; somebody was interfering with her business, and that somebody was too sly about it. Such things did not suit her. She read it again. The writer loved flowers—and so did she. He was sorry for the friendless—and so was she. He had given without a name—she had many times left a basket at a door which she knew hid a bare cupboard and coalless grate from the world, for Pride forbids Charity an entrance. Here was some one who had seen her, and perhaps thought her means limited, and took this way of helping her.

So, through their mutual love for flowers, and sympathy for the suffering, Susan had been reconciled and softened toward the unknown donor of twenty pounds, Bank of England. She smoothed, folded, unfolded and tested its crispness, which said, "I'm fresh and new. This is my first work, and may I be fortunate enough to be always in as good."

There was no time to lose. It was now much past noonday, and the services were to open at four—no later. Promptness and punctuality in all things! So she sought Samuel and told him of the Little Man, showed him both notes and said, "What shall we do?"

"It has been sent in delicacy and with goodness of

heart," said he after he had read the letter. "Shall we lay with her a cross and a crown, good Mother Susan?"

The lump came again, and she could not speak. Samuel saw the eyes fill, and turned to look for his hat. He knew a florist near by, and would order them at once. As he passed out of the room he heard her say—the lump was melting, so that she could speak,—"Samuel always knows just what to do. Meg will be so pleased. It's as much for her sake, as for saving the handkerchief and the flowers."

"Meg will be so pleased," said the street door as he closed it softly.

"Meg will be so pleased," said the latch as it clicked back to its catch on the gate.

"Meg will be so pleased," said the flowers through the fragrance they sent forth, as he saw them cut from their bushes. They were put into skilful fingers, and would be ready in less than an hour, the florist assured him.

"Meg will be so pleased when they come," said he, as he turned toward the office to say to Mr. Trout that he should not attend to business that afternoon, and why he should not.

Mr. Trout listened, expressed some sympathy for the unknown, but none for Miss Thump's whims, as he called her odd ways of satisfying the needs of the friendless.

"Very well," replied Mr. Thump, "if they are whims, they are those of mature years, and they shall be gratified. I had whims in babyhood, childhood, and boyhood, which were of no use to anybody when complied with, and yet she never made light of them, but bore with them more patiently, perhaps, than an own mother would have done. I owe her what I can never repay, and all her whims shall be my whims. If you will, I shall be glad to have you come at four o'clock, and see how she enjoys—although it is a sad enjoyment—doing for this unfortunate sister what no one else would."

Mr. Trout, as his partner expected he would, and was perfectly satisfied he should do, pleaded a business engagement. Nothing was worth doing, in his estimation, unless it had value in pounds and pence.

When Miss Thump turned from the dead and the master and his dog, she entered the office and found its inmates civil enough to tell her that all efforts at identification of the body had been of no avail, and that as the place it filled would no doubt be needed, and the time for inspection had expired, the Potter's Field must that day receive it.

She told them she would take it and see that it was laid next her own. At this there was, of course, some surprise expressed, and some hesitation to comply, for it aroused curiosity and suspicion, lest she might be the agent of some interested person who would thus, for his own reasons, seek to close quickly as possible all avenues to identification. The request was so unusual and—must we record it?—so unnatural, that it is no wonder there was much consultation of the officials, several journeys made by a messenger to some other in greater authority, many questions put to Miss Thump, which received such frank replies that they were impressed with their truth, and her goodness of heart. Her son's name was given as reference, and as they knew him, that aided her cause. At last the paper was filled where blanks had been left; the city was to give to the citizen, the public to the private. It needed her signature; she wrote without tremor, "Miss Susan Thump." The official, in sealing with the Great Seal of State, saw the 'Miss,' and looked up questioningly. She saw it, and going to the wall placed her finger upon one of many clippings from papers—the accumulation of years. It was from the Daily Bee, and in large capitals was headed, "Daring Exploit, by Susan Thump."

"It is enough," said he, "let me shake your hand. You are Susan Thump, and Samuel Thump is that child. The paper is yellow and worn, but the rescue I well remember. I saw it myself. I am proud to shake you by the hand. I do not now wonder that you want to give her a burial such as she deserves," and he pointed toward the room she had left. Miss Thump said little in reply. "Bread cast upon the waters" was ever returning to her in the most unexpected way. But thanking him for offers of assistance which he warmly made, she hurried out. The blind man would wait, and the dog Rover

would watch at the near corner, till she could return from a visit to Wreckers Court, not far distant, but nearer the water; so she told the master that they were civil at the office, and that she should at once make arrangements for the safety of the handkerchief and the flowers.

The Wreckers, like the Lunleys, all knew Miss Thump, and many a narrow, dim pane was tapped on from within as she passed by without. She had nursed and fed, clothed and warmed many a Wrecker. She nodded to the panes, little heeding who was behind them, anxious was she to reach the neatest and most wholesome of all the dwellings in the Court—the home of Martha Hamper—"Miss Martha," as Susan usually called her. She knocked and Martha opened; her hand was quickly extended and warmly grasped.

"Why, Miss Thump, how do you do? So glad to see you. Come in! come in!" and the hostess drew her visitor in, closed the door, and pulled a large chair from the corner—the chair in which she had mended and planned, and in which Meg had dreamed and read—one of those homely, comforting chairs, suited alike to young and old, prosy and poetical, tired and lazy; its arms always extended, its heart always tender and sympathetic. There is a world of comfort in such a chair!

Miss Thump, tired with the hurry, the anxiety, the excitement, sank into it and rested, but not long.

Miss Martha approached her, as if she would untie her bonnet; but Miss Susan shook her hand, and the hostess desisted.

"I want your help, Martha," at last said the visitor when breathing became more natural. "You know the young girl that Meg saw in the water?"

"Yes," replied Martha quickly. She feared Susan might add, "The one your brother pulled in." The business of her brother and Gaff was very distasteful to her, and she avoided allusion to it whenever it was possible to foresee such.

"Yes; Meg told me of her, and grieved as if it had been one of her own."

"And which looks enough like her to be, Miss Martha, that's just why I came for you. And finding the folks at

the dead-house civil, I asked 'em for her. I said I'd put a handkerchief over her face and flowers in her hand —that's what I told Meg, she cried so, poor child! And when I got there and thought maybe they'd steal 'em and hurry her into a box without 'em, I thought I'd stay and see that it was all right. But the more I looked at her, the more I thought I saw Meg there; and—Humph! I'm so silly, Martha!—But I can tell you, I cried, and went and asked for her to give her a burying—a decent burying. Then I said to myself, 'Susan Thump, you're foolish; do you expect to give buryings to all that you feel sorry for? She don't look like Meg. Give her the flowers and the handkerchief, and go home.' Then I would think, 'What if Samuel had been born a girl'—and that broke me down, Martha. I got leave to take her—See here," and she showed the paper stamped with the official stamp, and sealed with the Great Seal of State.

"You know how they are when they are out of the water, so she must be buried to-day. I own enough next to my uncle to lay in myself, but I'm going to give it to her, Martha, and Samuel will care for me when I go."

"If he shouldn't," said Martha, "there's folks enough who would. You've seen too many laid decently away not to be put away so yourself; but I hope you ain't going to need putting away for many a year yet. Did you leave Meg at your house? The girl grieves, and I don't know what to say comforting. She's nigh eighteen, and ought to know who she is. The money we found tied around her is getting lower every year. It's given her learning and clothes, but it can't tell her who she is. I've been dreaming, and dreaming so much about her mother o' late, that I think of her all day. Jane was alive when my brother found her, and I didn't know much about the business then, and besides, it was the first one they found, so I don't know how she looked. But I've seen a face in my dreams that I'd know, if I saw it when I was awake."

And while Martha Hamper was saying this, she was removing the long apron she wore, not because it was soiled—for dirt and dust and Martha never dwelt together —but because it was not so smooth, as the one which

replaced it. She was tying a clean white kerchief about her neck, and a plain but tasty bonnet, for Meg had made it, upon her head. She knew Miss Thump needed her help, and did not wait to be told of it. Many a limb they had together straightened, many hands folded and many eyes gently closed, and had sometimes wondered which would be left to do the same kind office for the other.

As she straightened this chair, and pulled that curtain —nothing must be left awry—she continued, "I saw Meg this morning with her mother's handkerchief, and if that's the one she gave you to put over the dead girl's face, take my advice, Susan Thump, and keep it or give it back. It will be of use some day, you see if it ain't. I've got everything she wore when my brother found her. You know he brought her to me, because Jane went out in the boat with him so much, and they could take Gaff; but this little thing was too tender, so I had her, and when Jane died I came to live here, and, of course, she came too. I'm ready now." And she took up a basket that was always ready too.

It contained all things necessary for preparing the helpless, lifeless mortal to make its last appearance before the tear-dimmed eyes of the loved ones, and the critical gaze of the stranger whom curiosity might lead to it. Miss Thump assured Miss Hamper that she should retain the handkerchief, and thought Meg would be willing she should when she knew what was to be done. So the two passed out of the house, and as they passed out of the Court, the Wreckers said, "Miss Susan went there in a hurry, and Miss Martha is going away with her in a hurry; it must be a bad case."

But none dared to ask whose the case might be. For when on professional errands neither woman lost one moment, and if anyone asked of them, the reply brought no information. The Wreckers knew this, and could only watch and wonder till the return.

They turned from the Court and from the water, till they reached a larger street—but a dingier house whose wind-beaten and rain-worn sign showed that the man who dwelt within held the commanding and, in its latter

half, appropriate name of Gregory Layem, and also, that he was prepared, from the little shop within, to furnish all things necessary for the last laying out, and for the last enclosing of the laid out. His face was long; his voice, which he called mournful, a disinterested person would call whining, and his head was ever shaking when a customer came, as if it meant, "It is sad; it is sad." Mr. Gregory Layem knew both, and expected an order at once. And in this he was not wrong. Miss Thump stated briefly what she wanted, and then consulted him and Miss Hamper upon the removal from the morgue. It was decided to have *her* brought at once there, prepared properly, with the assistance of Mr. Layem, and at the hour for service be taken to the home in Lunley Lane. A robe of pure white was chosen, a coffin plain but neat, and with silver enough to show that the occupant was thought worthy of all that one of her own family would have had.

So, Miss Thump and Gregory Layem, with a conveyance ordered to follow, went to the morgue, and showing the paper with its seal, claimed the dead of the keeper. The conveyance claimed it too. Mr. Layem accompanied the conveyance, and Miss Thump stopped to tell the blind man what would detain her awhile.

As the streets were strange to him, he told her he should be compelled to wait her return for guidance home. She looked inquiringly at Rover, but he gave no assurance that he knew the way back, and she told the master she would come that way when her work was done.

And Maria was tenderly, tearfully prepared for the last repose. Stranger hands can be loving; stranger hearts can be touched, when friendless and unknown, young and beautiful, the mortal part of the immortal is laid upon them.

The contents of Martha's basket was found invaluable. They had ordered a softer and more delicate pillow, and while Mr. Layem was making this and some other changes about the coffin in the little shop below, Miss Thump and Miss Hamper were preparing by laving and dressing the body in the parlor above. There was no Mrs. Layem to interfere. Mr. Layem told them, when he could think of

nothing else to say, that this was one of the many occasions when he saw how much a wife was needed to assist him. They did not agree with him as to this particular occasion, but knowing he had made many attempts to fill this vacancy in his home, and had been as many times refused, they gave no sign of comfort, when he added, "I shall find her yet, and she will be all the better if I have to look awhile." Yes, poor Gregory, you may find her, and when you do, wish you never had been born. Such things have been, and to a soft, simple nature like yours, it is likely such will be your fate.

When Maria was ready for burial and had clasped the flowers Susan brought, clasped them in her icy fingers, and been laid so that her head was slightly turned upon the satin cushion to hide some marks left by contact with the boat or something else floating against her, they all three stood silently by and looked upon her.

Suddenly Martha said, "Miss Thump, all ain't right about this girl. She looks like the one that comes to me, and yet she don't look like her. But now see if I ain't right when I say, whatever put one in the river put the other one there too, and I hope and pray it won't put Meg there also. I'll gather up these things and wash 'em clean, though they're cleaner now than most folks put on fresh—and we'll look 'em well over and see if we can find any marks anywhere. Look at her, Susan, her face has changed again. Don't she look like Meg?" and Martha who was so prosy and practical naturally had become a dreamer and fancier of likeness between living and dead.

Miss Thump looked closely, with her head on one side then on the other, and said, "There's one thing looks like Meg, but it's on the cheek that's turned to the pillow, and I am glad, for I don't want Meg to see it; she's full of notions enough now that worry her."

"Just so, I think," said Martha, "and if a body could only comfort her."

"Yes," returned Susan, "she gives comfort to others; a pity she can't have it, too."

"She will some day get what she deserves, I know. But how she's going to do it I can't tell," replied Martha, with the air of a prophetess.

"But we can't waste time, Miss Martha, now our work is done. I hope you haven't hurt your back lifting her. I had so much on my mind, I forgot to ask you how it's getting along since you tried the new Pain Stayer. Does it make the pain stay away or stay with you? I never knew which the name meant."

"It means both, for sometimes it stays and sometimes it goes. I am getting old, and before I know it, Susan, will be laying like that, with you and Meg to do for me, what we've just done for her," and Martha pointed sadly, and looked almost wistfully at the still sleeper.

"No, no, Martha, don't talk so, we must be going. Come," and Susan laid her hand gently on the arm of her friend, then turned to go to the shop, where Mr. Layem had already gone. There they completed the uncompleted arrangements—the hearse was to be plain, but not shabby, with three conveyances to follow. All to be at No. 8 Lunley Lane soon after three o'clock. And telling Mr. Layem his bill would be settled whenever he chose to present it, which prospect so delighted him that his voice suddenly lost its whine, his face grew shorter, and his head stopped shaking, "It is sad, it is sad," he bowed low while holding open the door to the street—the two after nodding adieu passed out.

As they hurried along, for the time was short for personal preparation, they saw Gaff's father in conversation with a stranger to Martha, but not wholly so to Susan, for she recognized the figure that had crept before the blind man and herself, and that had gone into and come out of the morgue. The old man recognized them from a distance; the figure took flight and slunk away.

The old man came to meet them, and when within "hailin' distance," as he would have called it, he grasped his hat, which was made for a larger head than his, and would have taken it off, so great was his respect for the little lady who accompanied his sister, but it seemed to suddenly occur to him that he would not know what to do with it after it was off, so he abandoned the one attempt of his life to be the polished gentleman, and let go his hat and let go his hold upon what, if he had persevered in, would have been of much benefit to him afterward

when he was by that fickle goddess fortune thrown among people who thought it quite the thing to do when a lady was before one. But he did, after he had heard their errand from Martha's lips, what perhaps the cultivated might not do, he spoke from his heart and said, "Lord bless ye, Miss Thump, I knowed she war too sweet and clean to be 'andled by 'em over at the dead-'us." He knew Susan was displeased when too much lauded, so he said no more.

Martha told him they must hurry, so all walked rapidly on. He told them Meg was at home, not a little troubled at Miss Susan's long stay, and still more so to find Martha absent too, as the neighbors had told her that they had gone together.

"She will be glad to hear the news I shall have for her," said Martha.

"And you must all be within time," came from Susan as she turned to leave them. "Mr. Hamper, you will come?"

Mr. Peleg Hamper assured her that he would, but made no further attempt to take off his hat, so without mortification at a second failure they separated. The brother and sister to Wreckers Court, where Meg, who had prepared their noonday meal, was watching anxiously their coming. The tidings put her heart at rest.

"Dear, good Mother Martha and Mother Susan, how can I ever thank you?" and throwing her arms around Martha's neck burst into tears.

Miss Hamper let her cry just as long as she wanted to, stroked her head, but said not a word—she knew it would be of no use. And when the girl had satisfied her heart she raised her head and said, with a sad smile, "When you told me, the washing, washing of the water that I heard while I was looking for you, stopped, and I felt so glad to have it go away that I had to cry. And now, Mother Martha, here's one, two, three big ones!" Saying this she kissed Miss Hamper on each cheek and then on her lips. "I must give the same to Mother Susan, and I must not forget uncle, here's one, two, three for him. Now we must eat and get ready."

So they hastily partook of Meg's cooking—she and

Martha put the room in order—and then began the dressing. Peleg was first attended to. His white shirt and dickey were taken by Martha from a box which she rarely opened, except when she bleached the contents thereof, lest time should yellow them beyond reparation, so seldom were they called upon for active service. Fortunately, they had just received their season's whitening, glossing, and ironing, and so were looked upon by Martha with much pride, by Peleg with dread, and by Meg with a suspicion that it might be a matter of some doubt whether when uncle's toilet was made, he might not rebel and after all appear in his easy every-day clothes. However, he took them, and without a word passed into a small room adjoining, which he and Gaff occupied for so much of the night as they might be on land, and so much of the day as was needful for rest and sleep.

Martha and Meg had a larger apartment on the other side of the living room, made into two by a curtain drawn through it, and to this they retired.

Peleg, as might be expected, made a few strokes with his arms and legs as if each one of them was an oar, and he was ready. Meg having promised to adjust his dickey and kerchief, he made no further attempt, nor even looked in the little remnant of a mirror which was caught by one of its jagged sides upon the wall. He sat down in the large room as uncomfortable as a man could be within starched linen, a broadcloth coat, and corduroy breeches. The first two belonged to the wear of the gentry, the last to that of the tradesman, and the boots which encased feet of ample proportions, to that of Peleg Hamper, being the only part of his wardrobe in keeping with the man.

Meg soon came out looking at home in her best, for it was more natural she should be in that. Her dress was black, of her own make, neat, and fitting perfectly. She had taken the pretty bright flowers from her bonnet, and in their stead was a black rosette. A white collar was confined at the throat by a bit of black ribbon gracefully knotted. Her face was pale, and Peleg thought her eyes a little wet with recent tears. She saw at a glance that uncle was ill at ease, but determined not to let him see that his discomfort was apparent, so she took up the wait-

ing dickey and black silk kerchief, gave the former a few bends here and there, the latter more than a few folds diagonally, for it was of generous size, smoothed his ear-locks back, buttoned the dickey on the rear button, tied it in front with the tape strings, all of which intricate fastenings were soon concealed by the great kerchief which, had Peleg been a small man, might have looked to an ordinary observer as if it threatened to conceal him also. But it concealed only so much of him as was covered by going around his neck twice, and what was then left gathered in a large bow, which was its only redeeming feature, for Meg had tied it. As this was completed Martha appeared in a shiny bombazine, with leg-o'-mutton sleeves, a white kerchief, a little coarse perhaps for the use it was put to, but fresh and folded in clean, clear folds about her neck ; a pair of black mits closed at the fingers like gloves—the cotton threads in them began to assert themselves in places, and they would have been called by the critical somewhat rusty ; a black dunstable, the gift of Meg, with a ribbon of the same color drawn in folds across its crown, and ending in strings which were fluttering about, waiting for Meg's deft fingers to confine them under her chin. This done, she took an umbrella, a shade on the green, in one hand, and a square folded handkerchief in the other.

All being now ready, they stepped out, Martha and Meg first. And as Peleg saw their backs fairly upon him, he threw his head as near one shoulder as he could, and then as near the other. This was a timely relief, for the dicky was of the type known as standing ; and so well and stiffly did it stand, that its smoothly ironed edge threatened, at least partial amputation to the wearer's ears. But this sly movement of the head crushed it, and crushed its hopes also. So with more ease he turned the key, which he took to the next-door neighbor's for Gaff, if he should return from fishing before they came.

The eyes of the Wreckers were upon them as they left the Court. And poor Peleg Hamper felt that the eyes of all London were upon him as they passed through the larger streets, and he suggested to the ladies that it would look much better if they entered Lunley Lane in a fly.

And without waiting for remonstrance at such an uncalled for expense, he hailed the driver of one, gave hurriedly the direction, and they all disappeared within.

While all that we have above recorded was transpiring, Susan had called for the mendicant and his dog, and told them what had occurred, as they walked somewhat hurriedly to the Lane. The man accompanied her to the gate, for, as he had accepted her invitation to come at four o'clock to the cottage, he said Rover must know just where she lived, that he might lead him there. So Rover scented the way under directions from his master, and they left Susan at the gate. Samuel soon came home, and she briefly told him what she had done, and what she was going to do. It was as she expected it would be: he did not object, but at once hastened out to engage the attendance of the Rev. Josiah Peerie, who after much clearing of the clerical throat, many thrustings in and out of the left hand between the fourth and the fifth fastening from the top of his closely-buttoned coat, while with his right hand he now and then smoothed back the long sleek locks which were brushed without parting from his forehead and fell in oily bunches upon his collar, expressed surprise that Miss Thump had not consulted him upon the propriety of giving Christian burial to one about whom there rested doubt and suspicion.

"The doubt," replied Samuel, hurt by this hesitation upon the part of a professed servant of Him who came to the friendless, and found none so lowly that He could not stretch forth His hands in blessing—"the doubt, is no doubt that she was a pure innocent girl. And the suspicion is that she was far from deserving the death she met, probably through the wickedness of others. It is supposed from her clothing that she was not a resident of London, and that may be the reason why she is unclaimed. Time is slipping fast," continued he, taking out his watch; "if I can find no one who is willing to read the service, I shall then do it myself. It is matter of little moment to the dead girl whether any be read—she is beyond caring for that. But death demands of us all tribute; we never let him take our friends without paying

respect to all that he has left us of them. We need no eulogy for this one, only a laying quietly away with a prayer," and he awaited a reply.

It came.

"As Miss Thump has always been a most exemplary and consistent member of the Church of the Sinner, of which I am the unworthy servant, I cannot see how I can refuse her request, though if it lead to remark, I must be held innocent."

"Innocent of what?" asked Mr. Thump in surprise. "Innocent of being what you profess—a Christian minister?" he would have said, but forebore for sake of Mother Susan, whom he knew would be disappointed if he placed aught in the way of his coming.

"Innocent of—of—" and as the Rev. Peerie looked into the frank manly face of Samuel Thump, he seemed to shrink in his own estimation, for he saw there nothing reflected from his own face, or his own character, "innocent of countenancing the life of the ungodly." And after this he shrank still more, till he dwindled from the character he had assumed before the world, into just what he was—a man of outward sanctity and inward nothingness, with no more fitness for the great work he had undertaken, than any sleek, well fed—we forbear the likeness, lest some one may think us wanting in respect, which we beg leave to say we do not lack for the calling, but which we do lack for many who consider themselves "called." And we may also add that there are too many to be found who are, after accepting the calling, so set in their own way of thinking, that neither coaxing nor beating, pelting nor pulling, will make them see a broader way, so narrow is their vision.

Yes, there are many like you, Rev. Peerie, with your soft white hand toying in your cozy study with a pen you cannot wield, or with the silken tassels of your eider-padded gown—the gift of your fair lady parishioners. You read the beautiful service of the Church, but you do not know what it means. You preach of Him who said, "Go ye into the by-ways, and compel them to come in." But you do not go; and when compelled to go, because you dare not refuse one who gives to contri-

bution plates and pays promptly her pew-rent, you say you are innocent of the going, where you might drop seed which would bear fruit for your Master's kingdom. But, thank God, there are many not like you, Rev. Peerie. Many who act their belief, who, like busy little Susan Thump, never say, "Are you saint or sinner, godly or ungodly?" but "Can I do you good?" And all these parched tongues moistened, these hungry souls fed, what will they say, and how will they welcome their helpers, when the portals open and the active lover of Christ and *all* his children are bidden to enter in.

But we have left Samuel Thump, who without comment left the Rev. Peerie, and hastened back to Mother Susan, saying simply, "He will come."

The cross and the crown came; and soon after Maria was brought, and the casket which held her was laid upon the solid mahogany table with its large leaves, which Susan had owned ever since she could remember. The face was uncovered. It looked glad to be in the cottage, Susan thought, but it might have been a reflection of the gladness from her heart, that since it must be, she could have it there.

"Let Meg lay the cross and crown upon her," she said, and so they awaited her coming.

One after another they came from the Lane, followed soon by Mr., Miss Hamper, and Meg; Isaac, who was welcomed by Susan herself, the blind man and Rover, and lastly came, with book and gown, the Rev. Peerie.

Meg, Martha, Susan, Peleg, and Samuel, just before his arrival, gathered about the coffin and tearfully looked upon the sweet face. Meg placed the cross and the crown, kissed her brow, and between the great heart sobs said to Susan, "Do not put the handkerchief over her face, I want her to see it all. She will be so much happier when she knows we cared for her. What a pity we had not found her before it was too late."

Susan could not reply, her heart was full, and Samuel taking Meg's hand led her to a seat near by and calmed her, as of course he could.

Mr. Hamper, forgetful of personal discomfort, looked

also, and the great rough hand wiped from the bronzed cheek something—it must have been a tear.

He knelt down after gazing a moment at the crossed hands and at the fingers which held Susan's flowers, took from his pocket a long leathern purse which he always carried on land as well as on water, and reaching into it brought out several coins and a few trinkets, all of which he threw back after selecting something. He tied the purse with its leathern strings, twisted its mouth for better security, and put it back in his pocket.

The something he had selected was the ring from "Henry to Maria."

"I never meant to keep it," said he, in a choked voice, "if anybody 'ad a claimed 'er; I only took it to keep it from them at the—" And he stopped suddenly, as if he did not want the pure white presence before him to hear that she had been at the dead-house. Then, kneeling still beside her, he was about to take up the finger on which he found it, when a voice seemed to say, "Show it first to them all; by it I may be known sometime." So plainly did he hear it that he looked up at the dead face: the lips were like marble. He looked around the room, but no one there had spoken. As if led by an invisible power, he handed the ring to each one, saying, "This war all there war. I'm goin' to give it to 'er. Look at it, so ye ken swear to it."

They read in turn the inscription. The ring was plain and massive, and might have been a wedding-ring, so it had nothing to mark it from any other of its kind. Samuel was the last to read and examine it, which he did critically and handed it back to Mr. Hamper, who raised reverently the finger—it was too much swollen. He tried the next—on that the circle slipped as if it were in its home.

"I feel more like to a man now," said he rising; "I give to 'er wot belonged to 'er."

After a few moments of silence, Samuel opened the door into the adjoining room, and those who were there passed in. And the Rev. Josiah Peerie found sitting in Miss Thump's little parlor a simple-hearted, sad-hearted group: he read the service, vouchsafed no remarks.

The people from the Lane looked upon her; the blind man passed his hand over her face. Isaac Harold drew his cloak about his throat, clutched at its large pin, and under his breath muttered, "Curse him! curse him!"

Mr. Layem, with crape upon his arm and crape upon his hat, closed the coffin; it was borne out and into the waiting hearse. The three conveyances followed, containing the Rev. Josiah Peerie, Susan and Samuel, Meg and Martha, Isaac Harold, Mr. Hamper, the blind man and Rover.

CHAPTER XIX.

MR. HAMPER VISITS JERICHO, WHERE TRAVELLERS STOP TO BE REFRESHED.

THE morning was foggy—in London most mornings are; the ale was foamy—everywhere good ale is. But the fog showed no respect either to the desires of the traveller or the hostess, for it would hang just as dense over the sign, "This is Jericho! Traveller, stop and be refreshed," as it did over and around Peleg Hamper.

And the possibility was fast becoming a probability that the traveller would miss the foamy ale and the hostess the reckoning which his visit might bring, for he having never visited Jericho before, was as completely befogged concerning the exact place he was in as a dense fog could render him, and he began to plunge into this bank, then into that, with but little prospect of doing aught else or finding aught else. He did not know whether he was going forward or backward in his journey, for though the banks parted their misty curtains and let him in willingly enough, they closed at once behind him, and he had only to walk through into the next. He was neither poet, scientist, nor artist, so he did not feel the loss of any suggestions nature might make, or information she might give; he only felt that the monotony of the fog-banks and uncertainty of locality was enough to make

a man draw in sail and wait for wind or sun to dispel the fog and show him the locality.

There was an unusually heavy bank just ahead, and he decided to emerge from that before he anchored. And well that he did, for it brought him fair and square in front of Jericho's hospitable inn.

Rover, who had not gone with the blind man that morning—it might be because his master was too considerate of his welfare to trust him out in the fog, or it might be for other reasons—happened to be in the doorway, and hearing footsteps, barked, as any other dog would do, and the bark proved a beacon to Mr. Hamper. He used his arms again as if they were oars, and paddled so near the *bark*, that he could discover well the owner of it, and recognizing him as the dog who occupied a seat opposite him in the funeral coach, decided at once that he was in the right port, although its name, which swung directly over his head, was lost in the bank.

Rover seemed to be on the lookout for him. He ceased barking, jumped towards and upon him with a wag of welcome, leaped across a narrow passage, looked back, as if to say, "Follow me," stood upon his hind legs and reached the wooden latch, which held closed a door, with his forepaws pressed its thumb-piece, and when down upon all fours again, pushed with his nose and stood aside for Mr. Hamper to enter the open door.

"Ye rigged that well for a sail—the door, I means," he added, as Rover looked up at him inquiringly. And as Peleg turned after entering, he saw Mr. Wallace gazing anxiously out of a window opposite. He surely was not gazing because he could see anything? No, he was looking beyond the fog banks. He saw a pretty village many miles from London, whose densest banks were carpeted with green, studded here and there with yellow and blue and purple; banks that could be walked *upon* and not *through;* banks which overlooked a clear, happy stream, that had never been forced to witness wicked deeds and then help conceal the traces thereof; banks that brought pleasure to all who beheld them, and did not make one button his coat under his chin and feel his way into them, wondering where they would lead to;

banks on which he had walked and talked, dreamed and planned, read and written; banks that had beheld the birth, the growth, the burial of hopes that had taken such root in his soul, that upon their death he covered them, when he went forth to meet the world, as we cover choice perennials in autumn to protect them from the winter's blast. The world might have thought that they had been there years before, but not that they were yet alive and feeding upon the rich soil his soul provided, to spring forth some day in bud and full flower.

Yet not as the hopes of long ago would they blossom. From them had arisen a fairer, but not a frailer germ. It was the old bereft of the earthly; it was the spirit without the physical.

The banks he was now dreaming upon, the stream he was watching, and had been ever since the blind man and Rover had returned from the morgue and the funeral. And he hoped, but dare not be certain that he knew why he was thus watching and dreaming.

So lost was he that he did not hear the door swing on its rusty creaking hinges, the entrance of Mr. Hamper, or his speech to Rover. He began finding himself only when the latter sat down by him and wagged his tail so strongly and decidedly that it was like the beating of a trip-hammer on the bare floor. The dog sprang up, lapped his face, gave a short quick bark, which might be interpreted, "I've got him," and without waiting for a word or a pat of approval bounded across the room, caught Mr. Hamper by the skirts of the long coat he wore, and pulled him well into the middle of the room before Mr. Wallace was fully restored to himself, his surroundings, and the use of the man before him to aid in the work he was doing. When Mr. Hamper doffed his hat, or rather thought he would like to, and even made the attempt before Miss Thump, he was unsuccessful, because he did not know how to get it back upon his head again; but not so perplexed was he now, for after taking it off in respectful recognition of Mr. Wallace's "How are you, sir?" he knew just what to do with it, and was not at all embarrassed, neither was the hat when he folded it up and put it in his pocket. True, he missed it for a moment

while his host walked to the end of the room to bring a couple of chairs and place them before a deal table, so he took it out and rolled it this time, put it back in his pocket, which was large enough to hold a dozen hats, and the seats being ready he slid into the nearest, feeling relieved.

The truth was he expected to meet a man nearer his own station in life than he saw at a glance Mr. Wallace was. He had inferred his rank, both from his being intimate with the blind mendicant, and from the fact that he resided at Jericho, and to the contradiction of these expectations was due the rolling and replacing of the hat, the awkward slip into the seat and the abashed look he gave to Mr. Wallace, who seated himself opposite.

"You are Mr. Peleg Hamper, of Wreckers Court?" said Mr. Wallace in an inquiring tone, and not a little surprised at the hangdog look of the man whom he had been led to believe was ignorant and uncultivated, but honest and frank.

Of the first two he had little doubt, but his present demeanor did not indicate the last two.

"That be wot they calls me, sir, and that be where I lives," replied the owner of the name, and as he looked up this time his head did not fall after the reply; his eye was brighter, and he seemed more like the honest man that he was. "The blind man who war in the coach yesterday said it might be as I'd be of use to y' in finding out what y' wants to know. Now, afore we begins, sir, let me tell y' I be poor, but I calls myself honest. I 'ooks for 'em, I knows, but y' never 'eerd that Peleg Hamper took from un on 'em when wot they 'ad could help them they b'longed to. If I finds un on 'em will sure go to the dead-'us, I slips off any little thing wot be convenient, and opens this 'ere 'old I keeps in my pocket an' 'eaves it in. I allus watches if any folks claims, then I gives 'em the tell-tales, that's what I calls 'em, that be found on 'em—tell-tales—and awful tales some on 'em tells, too. If folks don't claim 'em I say I be poorer than the men at the dead-'us, and so I keeps wot I finds. If y' wants good an' I can 'elp y', Peleg Hamper's yer man."

Saying this he had forgotten that he was addressing a

gentleman, so anxious was he to make himself perfectly understood before any offers were made, or any subject broached, and grew bold and bright as he talked.

"I seek," returned Mr. Wallace, pleased beyond measure with the frank, homely way in which Peleg stated his opinion of himself, "to do justice to the wronged, to bring to light dark deeds by which the young and innocent have suffered, and to restore property to rightful heirs. Here is my hand, friend, and we will first drink to success in a glass which the hostess of this inn knows well how to have poured," and he laid a clean well-shapen hand, browned by sun but not by labor, into the unwashed, uncouth, but withal hearty and well meaning hand of Peleg Hamper. After a cordial shake, he rapped loudly for the keeper of the bar, who appeared, and with much deference soon reappeared with the ale, which was foamy, notwithstanding the morning was foggy.

Mr. Hamper was thirsty and emptied the glass greedily. Mr. Wallace was not thirsty, but to put his guest more at his ease emptied his glass also, but slowly and with a preoccupied air, as if he did not taste its contents. He was about to rap for the re-filling of both when Hamper said,

"Bleeged to y', sir; y' ken take in a 'eavy cargo easy anough, but when she begins to reel, 'tain't so easy to 'eave over wot y' doesn't want. I used to get mor'n I could sail under, but I promised long ago I'd call it high tide at un glass, and I've kep' it, sir, ever sence."

"And I shall not be the one to help you break the resolve," replied Mr. Wallace, scoring another one in favor of Hamper. "Now there is no use in parley, let us come to the point, and our business for this morning will not be long. Tell me all you know about the last—I believe it is the last—body you found."

Mr. Hamper tossed his head to throw an uncombed lock out of his line of vision, folded back the cuffs of his coat sleeves, by many inches too long, leaned forward on the table, upon which he laid his crossed arms, and thus began:

"Yes, it be the last un, sir; I ain't 'ad the 'art to keep a sharp lookout sence; and yit if there'd been any on 'em,

I s'pose Gaff 'ud a seed 'em, if I didn't. He be keen, Gaff be, but y'd never know it by looking at him. Shall I begin way up stream and cum down with 'er, or shall I tell only wot I knows sence she anchored?"

"Let me know every particular, never mind of how little importance it may seem to you," replied Mr. Wallace with an air of anxiety and impatience to hear, and yet a dread of what might be revealed.

"Mebbe I'll be slow, sir, but I'll be sure; and if I doesn't keep nigh enough to shore in the words I uses, all y've got to do be to cry, 'Land ho!' and I'll steer closer. 'Tain't fresh water I likes to live upon, and it been't on it I've spent many a year; it be on the salt—a long pull fur weeks and months, there be where I be home, sir, and there's where I'd be now, but for Jane and Gaff.

"Jane and me sailed together once on the same ship, and when we landed I got a hankiring after 'er, so that she said if I'd stay on land she'd jest as soon be Mrs. Peleg Hamper as stay Miss Jane Cake, and so I never shipped agen. I been't sorry either, fur Jane war a good first mate, tho' y' might o' thought sometimes she war cap'ain and I war mate. It never done no 'arm to me to let 'er be so sometimes, and it made 'er pull a better 'and when she war mate agen. So we kep' in a pretty fair course, puttin' in first one port, then another, to get anough fur a 'onest livin'; but I warn't made fur a landlubber, and I didn't feel easy till I got Snatcher; before I got 'er Jane and me 'ad been towing a little mite of a craft through pretty rough water fur 'im—'e warn't so strong built as I've seen, and many a time I thought 'e'd let go of our tow and sail over yonder on 'is own account, but you'd never think to look at 'im now that 'e 'adn't allus draw'd in deep water. Gaff 'll soon be 'ead an' ears over me.

"Well, I got Snatcher, and then we done better. I got a deal to do for folks pullin' 'ere and there, and I fetched in many a stick that kep' us warm and cook'd the child's gruel. Un night Jane said she'd go 'long, and she did; it war the first time we'd been out at night, and we didn't know wot we war steerin' first this way and then

that fur. Jane said I pulled wrong and I said Jane pulled wrong, and she let go the paddle and I let go the paddle, and it didn't make no difference—the boat went 'ere and there just the same, port and lee, lee and port; and says I, "Jane, Snatcher's like a dog 'untin' prey, suthin moves 'er to 'unt, and we'll 'ave to 'old taut and watch." As I said that, Jane reached out 'er 'and—it war a 'and y' could see well, even when it war dark, and when it p'inted y' knowed where to look. I used to ask 'er not to 'old it aloft when I war lookin', for I couldn't see much else.

"Well, Jane p'inted; the night war'nt dark, but the tide war swellin' fast and the water riled, and everything looked the same color to me. But Jane war keen—Gaff's like 'er—and seed wot Snatcher was a steerin' to. And as soon as she p'inted the boat war still, dead still, even the swell didn't move 'er. Jane looked at me, and I looked at Jane. She raised 'er finger agen, but I couldn't 'elp 'er. I thought the old 'un 'imself war after us, and I 'eld to the sides o' Snatcher—that war un o' the times, sir, when I let Jane be cap'ain—and I doesn't think, at that particklar time I war even as good as first mate. She took both paddles and jest paddled right up to it, and when she dropped the paddles, Snatcher war dead still agen.

"The cap'ain never looked at me agen for a 'and at the cargo; she jest 'eld taut with un 'and an' with t'other took' old of—of—a woman! I know'd then wot 'er 'ands war made so big for. She pulled it alongside and says, 'Peleg Hamper, y'r 'fraid, ain't y'r? If I war in there 'ud y' want anybody to pull me in and see if I couldn't be fetched to.' Says I, 'I'd say t'war mean if anybody didn't.' With that I 'eaved up 'er feet, while Jane kep' a good grip on 'er shoulders, and she war in the boat.

"She 'adn't been in the water long. Jane allus said she know'd she fell in, or jumped, or war pushed in jest the time we cut loose from shore, and that war wot made us go out that night. Well, Jane rubbed 'er and blowed 'er, and I pulled for port like I never pulled afore, but no use."

Here Mr. Hamper stopped quite abruptly and was

lost for a moment in thought. He at last decided to keep back the rest that he knew, or at least a part of it, and continued: To make it short, nobody know'd 'er. She war at the dead-'us, and Jane and me went often to look at 'er; and if we 'adn't been so poor, we'd a put 'er away oursel's; but folks can't allus do what they'd like to. That war our first, and we kind of drifted into the bus'ness. After Jane shipped one day under another cap'ain, who takes a crew but never brings 'em back, I felt lone in the boat, and took a pardner. We didn't pull together as Jane and me did, so I said I'd wait for Gaff, and I did.

"Well, sir, I be long, but it be better to know who y've got in tow, so I tell ye this about myself. Off and on I've 'ooked many on 'em in fifteen years, but I never found anything like the first un till I 'ooked *'er* the t'other night. They war both sweet, clean ones, smelt o' green grass; made me think o' things I never seed, and never expect to, and I'll tell y' sir" (here he leaned toward Mr. Wallace till their faces almost touched, his voice sunk to as soft a whisper as he could), "wot sent un, sent t'other!"

Mr. Wallace started, and with ashen lips gasped, "What makes you think so? Tell me quickly, man. Tell me all, keep back nothing. Here!" and he took from his purse a five-pound note, and thrust it into the hand of Peleg. "It shall be doubled for everything you tell me that will aid my work."

Mr. Hamper drew back, and laid down the note saying, "Don't y' pay till y' know y've got suthin to pay for? Mebbe wot I be a goin' to say won't be wot y'r expectin'."

Mr. Wallace saw that he had been too hasty in showing so much eagerness to possess this man's knowledge, thus, in some measure, putting himself in his hands. But he let the note remain upon the table and said, almost imperiously, "Go on! go on!"

"When the first 'un laid at the dead-'us I seed a man go to look at 'er; I didn't like 'im. He war slimy like, and allus a wipin' off the slime, and the more 'e wiped, the more slime war left. I never forgot 'im, and I says to Jane many a time, 'e dont go so often cause 'e wants to

see that woman layin' there; the devil makes 'im go, and it's the devil in 'im as makes 'im wipe so much. 'E's a bad un, I knows, for 'e don't cut the water clear and clean like a fair sailin' barque. 'E been't tidy in his riggin, y' thinks 'e be goin' into every port. Well, I never see 'im after she war laid away, till *she* laid in the dead-'us. Yes, I did, too. One day me and Jane war pullin' along a lone place, and we seed 'im ashore, as if 'e war a lookin' for wot 'e couldn't find. I see 'im at the dead-'us t'other day, wipin' and wipin' and I'd like to know if 'e's wiped all them fifteen year. 'E looked as if 'e'd weathered lots o' gales sence then, and 'ad 'ard work to weather 'em too. Afore Miss Susan Thump and the blind man come that day, the devil took 'im in to wipe the slime off, and put 'im out to wipe more slime, and when he seed 'im, 'e begun to wipe faster and faster, and didn't go back to look at 'er agen, but 'e comes to me and says, 'You found 'er I 'ears?' 'I did,' says I. Then 'e begun to wipe, and Miss Thump come by with Marthy Hamper, an' says 'e, 'I'll see y' agen.' But mebbe the blind man told y' that I fetched sight o' 'is sail when we war near the grave, and I felt so riled inside like, that I says, 'That man knows more'n 'e'd like folks to know.' And the blind man war in the same coach, and says, 'If y' calls at Jericho y'll meet some un as wants to know what y' knows for good, not for bad.' So I be come, sir."

"When will this man see you?" asked Mr. Wallace, endeavoring to calm himself.

"Don't know; 'e didn't tell me," said Peleg, "but soon; I'm thinkin' 'e's uneasy like. I finds the water allus draws 'em. I've 'ad 'em like 'im. Many on 'em; I knows 'em," and he tossed his head, which meant, "I know just how to treat them, too, to get any needful information."

Mr. Wallace ordered the glasses re-filled. Peleg was thirsty from talking and his host from excitement, and they were emptied in silence. Mr. Wallace was anxious to be alone, and Peleg was anxious to go. So both arose; the former took up the note and pressed it into the hand of the latter, who said, "Not till y' knows it be yer man."

"Never fear that, Mr. Hamper; your story has been

worth to me ten times—a hundred times this, and you will oblige me by taking it; and if you know in time when this man will seek you, leave word with the blind man."

The fog was less dense, and Peleg Hamper found his way quite readily back to Wreckers Court.

CHAPTER XX.

OF ONE WHO COULD NOT REACH PORT.

THE papers were yellow and tender, some even musty. The hands that opened them, the eyes that read them, the mouth that so blandly spread itself, as one after another they were laid away, belonged to Lawyer Trout—the wily Trout, who toyed with bait that he thought was golden, that he was sure was golden. He had glided around it, under it, over it, and very near it for many months. And so sure was he of its being a rare, precious bait, that he had almost decided to come near enough to nibble; and having thus nibbled, he would soon swallow it all, trusting, if there should be concealed a hook, its sharpness would be so modified by the richness of the bait, that he would never feel its sting.

The yellow, tender, and musty were not to be found in the office of S. S. Trout, neither was that gentleman himself to be found there when our chapter opens. They were yellow because they had only at rare intervals seen the light for almost as many years as the lawyer could count since he had opened a pair of twinkling eyes upon this world of craft and cunning—two things which he considered it necessary to bring to as high state of perfection as one could in his own nature, to be able to cope successfully with the world. It is a matter of record in the Trout family, that this particular member of it began the fostering of these two requisites at an ante-natal period, and was crafty and cunning enough to step upon life's stage before he was, according to nature's laws, to be expected, and before all things were in readiness for his advent. Thus early he began to play an underhanded game.

They were yellow, we said, because they had been kept in the dark, like one who justly inherited what they treated of. They were tender for much the same reason. They were musty because they had been on deposit in subterranean vaults that were owned by the municipality; and that were opened by the officers of the municipality, when a peep at their contents was shown by such an honorable, well reputed person as Lawyer Trout to be absolutely necessary to the settling of an estate—not in Chancery, for then it would never be settled, and the search for clear titles would be useless—which had been unclaimed, and whose habitable portion had given shelter for years to none other than bats and owls, because none other had, in all that time, showed so clear a claim to its shelter.

As we have recorded, the mouth spread itself blandly, and as the eyes continued to read, and the hands to lay away, it spread still more blandly, till it threatened to spread completely over the face, for craft and cunning were just as busy within as hands and eyes were without. So what wonder the mouth should express the degree of success which craft and cunning whispered might easily be reached if all would agree to work amicably under their leadership. If their plan was successful, what joy it would be to see their master richly rewarded. The hands would then be softer and fairer than now; they could be laved in rose-water, and incased in web-like silk; the eyes would never be strained by perusing long documents, or bored with dry law text; the mouth would have nothing to do but smile. So craft and cunning, with these their willing aids, made ready to begin their work.

While this agreement was being entered into, Mr. Trout was making copious notes of many, and copy of one of the yellow, tender, and musty. Most carefully did he trace and retrace every word, line, angle, and scroll of this latter; for as he said to himself, though never relaxing in blandness, so sure was he of help, "I do not find the one link needful."

Craft replied very curtly, "Make it, then," and Cunning added, "I'll show you how."

So the lawyer of good repute, with these powerful auxiliaries, laid the foundation for further recordances by

our pen, for to portray faithfully the suggestions of craft and the work of cunning is our task.

These yellow, tender, and musty had never been disturbed since they had been admitted to the guardianship of the subterranean vaults years before the curtain was lifted first upon the drama whose scenery we paint. The municipality's officers had opened these vaults at the request of the Lord of Ivandale, and the history of each claimant to his estate, so far as he then knew, had been laid therein with titles, claims, quit-claims and documents innumerable which he would never trust elsewhere. These last it were which had yellowed with time, while their owner had sallowed and soured without reason. They had grown tender, while he had grown harder and sharper. They had grown musty, while he had covered himself with a moral, mental, and spiritual mould, so deep in color, so thick in growth, that everything and everybody was distorted through the mouldy look which he took of them.

He hated sunshine, and a smiling face made the lines, the hard lines, harder and deeper. He hated fresh, free air, and a bright, breezy body only thickened the mould —never dislodged one particle of it.

He had never been a happy man even in the heyday of youth. At the start in life the fault was not his if he was not as other children, for his moral make-up was not well balanced. It was too weighty in some places and too light in others. It jutted out here and sunk deep there, and the most prominent juttings indicated too well developed suspicion, jealousy, and love of revenge for wrongs which were for the most part imaginary. As he grew into boyhood and youthful manhood he might still be held partially blameless for nursing suspicion, fostering jealousy, and hugging supposed wrongs till they grew to such mammoth proportions that he could not meet an extended hand without first dropping his eyes and in the most contemptible manner looking at the friendly hand, the arm, and the nearest pocket to see that nothing lurked within either which might regard the meeting of the fingers as a signal to burst forth. He saw an enemy everywhere.

We said he was at least partially blameless, for he had no one to teach him that if he cherished frankness he weakened suspicion; if he encouraged confidence he drove away jealousy; that he could, if he would, lessen somewhat the juttings, and round in proportions the deeply sunken of his nature. There was no one to show him this. His mother, who should have done it, was glad to keep from his sight; she knew he was a moral deformity. His father was rich and a man of the world, yet not a spendthrift. He had inherited vast wealth, and although he was dissipated, never let slip a penny too much. The prospective heir brought peace and quiet for a time within the walls, but when he showed himself taciturn, morose, and as disagreeable and unlovable as a youngster of his years could be, the father cast him off. He trained his horses and his hounds, whipped and coaxed their faults out of them, but let the little being for whose moral lacking he was responsible, grow as he would, or as he could —and if he had seen fit not to grow at all, it would have suited better. Being contrary, of course, this last he refused to do—to be sure he did not make an oral declaration of this determination on his part, but as each day he grew stronger and stouter the inference was, that nature had not the least idea of laying him out of the sight of a father who was growing daily in hate toward him, and of a mother who saw she was not able to control him, or show him how to control himself; so she left him to the care of those who gave him a loose rein for sake of peace.

When he was nearing majority, his father one day shipped with more cargo than he could carry; for as he grew in years his times of shipping grew in frequency, and his carrying powers grew weaker in proportion, and it was never known exactly what port he reached, or if he reached port at all after he got sober. All that was known of him after the last bottle was uncorked and emptied was that he slid off the softly padded chair upon the cold marble floor, laid his head upon a huge griffin's claw that helped support the massive table, and slipping anchor, was off on a voyage whence he never returned—that is, he did not return as he always had done under similar circumstances. But upon the day when Ivandale

greeted its new master, there are rumors that at the feast the guests were gloomy and often looked behind them with a timid air, called their carriages early, and breathed more freely when without the walls. That the servants actually saw the cause of this as they were hurriedly clearing the board; that their old master walked in, sat in the chair he had last occupied, called for his favorite wine, which the butler, not daring to say he would first ask the young lord's permission, uncorked, poured out and handed to the ghost, who quaffed deeply, called for more, quaffed again, called again, and so continued to call and quaff till there was not a drop left. Just then the new lord and his mother, who had heard from the terror-stricken menials of the unbidden guest, appeared in the doorway. The former advanced in a menacing way, when the ghost seemed to choke with rage at sight of him, and sliding from the chair laid his head again on the griffin's claw; the latter in turn sank upon the threshold unconscious. The young lord ordered the attendants to take her away, and after them he bolted and barred doors and windows, turned to the griffin's claw, but there was no head upon it; searched every nook and corner of the spacious apartment; opened every closet and found nothing to show how the guest had entered, how he had left; and but for the long row of emptied bottles he would have thought it all a delusion. It is upon these rumors that we base the doubt that he never reached port, for if he had, why should he come back to drink again, slide off again, and lay his head again on the griffin's claw? No, he must have been tossing still on the unknown seas, headed, no doubt, for port beyond, but pulled back to this by cords whose threads illy spun and badly twisted had been made of acts unmanly, unjust and unrighteous.

The mother of the new master of Ivandale lay long in the swoon, and when she did open her eyes they rested upon her son, who for the first time in his life, showed that he was touched; they rested upon him and over the face came a look of pity, of motherly tenderness, of sorrow that he was what he was. She put out her arms, as if she would take him where he ought to have been long years before—to her heart. But he moved not, for truth

to say, he knew not what it meant; and he looked back to see if there were not behind him some favorite attendant who was thus besought. The mother saw and read the look, though her eyes were glassy; she extended a little more her arms, though they were stiffening. No response; and in that moment of agony she lived an eternity of penance. Her only child stood by her in her dying moments, not as he would have stood by his petted expiring hound, for to that he would have said, "Poor fellow!" But to her no word of sympathy, no gesture of pity; and yet he was moved, for a mist gathered before his vision, and to dispel this he passed his hand over his eyes. She saw that, too, and knew somewhere in his heart there was an opening; and a happier look swept over her face as she drew her last breath.

And this was the nearest to a tear that had then ever been known to gather in the eyes of the Lord of Ivandale.

After this night suspicion jutted out of his nature more boldly than ever, for he now had an unseen foe, who might invite himself to his board whenever the cords tightened and pulled him back for more wine. The home, always tiresome to the master, was doubly so now, since he had to come in contact with the details of the household; so for company and relief from annoyance of trifles he determined to install a mistress over Ivandale.

The lady chosen was heiress to an honorable name, but not wealth to equal his. She was a timid creature who always did as she was bidden, and was never known to do without being bidden. Her father's fortunes were waning, and the prospect of establishing her so well, gave that gentleman a new lease, although a not very lengthy one upon life, for his health was waning even faster than his fortunes. And she being the only daughter unmarried, would, he knew, be left with far from enough for her station when he should be gone.

So Helen of Bonham became Lady Helen of Ivandale.

For a time there was such gayety within the walls as had not been known for many generations. There was music and dancing, eating and drinking, hunting and riding. Some of the fairest and noblest came to pay respect to the young lord, and tribute to his lady.

The former had never shown himself possessed of hospitality, scarcely of common courtesy, before. He smiled as if he really meant to smile; he even laughed aloud, not boisterously, to be sure, but as if there was heart in the laughter. He rode with dash and followed the hounds with zest; he even played the cavalier to the lady guests, and was surprised at the success which he attained in the new rôles that he attempted. He was a man among men, and having arrived at years of reason, we do not hold him so blameless for not continuing to be a man. But no doubt the years, when they came, found little reason to greet them and go hand in hand working together for their master's good. So, instead of giving reason air and sunshine, life and strength, he let the juttings overshadow it till at last, like the rest, it was lost beneath the mould.

Yet, he might have been a man, for awhile at least, finding himself happier as a host than he had ever been before, had he not one night unluckily ordered the cloth laid in the banqueting hall, which had never been opened since there had sat within one more than was bidden to the feast. He would have remanded the order a moment after, so chill and uncomfortable it made him, had it not been for appearing cowardly in the eyes of his servants. As it would close the marriage fêtes, he had invited the families for miles around. The day was red-lettered by a hunt whose daring and exploit sent the blood coursing through the young lord's veins as it had never done before, and a sorry hour for him and his that he ever drew rein and dismounted. It were better that he were galloping even now, for thus much unhappiness would have been ridden out of existence, or rather would have been kept out of existence. But he, and likewise his merry guests, did draw rein, dismount, and after due time appear at the well spread board. Their eating was not out of the ordinary course; the dishes were appetizing and the appetites were keen enough to relish. Hearts were light and tongues were glib, and none more so than that of the host; but the pall fell when their drinking began. Each looked at his right, then at his left, then furtively behind him: none was more ill at ease than the host. Many a bottle was uncorked, many a glass un-

tasted. In vain did the butler, who was determined to maintain the honor of the house, urge those under him to pass from guest to guest as if the pall were not there.

They had felt the same fear, and a damp fear it was, that made them moist in a heated room; they had felt it before, and knew their old master was thirsty again. The pall grew heavier and blacker, the more those about the board drank or tried to, for little was really swallowed, though out of respect glasses were raised. Feeling this increasing weight the host unceremoniously gave the signal for withdrawal, and the guests were not slow to follow.

The butler and his assistants began, before the last was fairly over the threshold, to clear the board, that is, they hurriedly made away with what they could eat and drink in peace in their own hall: if the master waived ceremony, the hirelings might also. The butler was so considerate for his old master, that he set a row before his place and his padded chair, a row whose caps told that the mildew upon them was the work of years, and that these years had been quite as busy flavoring the wine within as leaving impress on the caps without. He took good care not to be left alone, though, and set them out while the others were gathering. "I can't wait to rub 'em up," said he as if apologizing for the mildew and the lack of polish. "He won't mind if he's thirsty," he added as he hastened to follow the last retreating fellow-servant.

Had he looked back, he would have seen the padded chair occupied. This he feared to do, lest he might be summoned to attend; he only heard the cork draw and the wine flow as he closed softly the door.

The guests in drawing-room and *salon* tried in vain to be at home, and their host tried in vain to make them so. Steps were slow in dance with the younger, and words were slower in speech with the older. Some among them had been to the last feast, and again, as soon as courtesy would permit, bade adieu to lord and lady with no envy of the owners of those spacious halls with elegant hangings, massive furniture, storied paintings; those vast surroundings with velvet lawns, turfed terraces, avenued parks. They hooded and cloaked with not one sigh, ex-

cept it were of relief, as they glanced into enticing mirrors in their hurried exit. The permanent guests were not so fortunate, but with well-bred composure awaited the opportunity to plead fatigue from the day's chase and beg leave to withdraw.

So one after another was gone, and the young lord bidding his bride good night, with a look as near pity in his eye as it was possible for him to express, as she turned to her own apartments—also glad of something she knew not what—hurried, or rather was hurried back to the deserted banquet room. Not a light had been extinguished, for which he was secretly glad, and yet had a servant been near at hand he would have issued a sharp reprimand for neglect of duty.

He stood in the doorway, the same doorway through which many an ancestor had passed before him, newly made lords, newly made husbands, newly made fathers, newly made wifeless, and newly made childless. The feast upon possession, the feast upon marriage, the feast upon birth, and the feast upon death, to all these had this same portal admitted guests, but never before had it shadowed the host passing to his own board as a guest, for as he looked within—at the walls, the floor, the ceiling, anywhere but at the table, yet there at last he turned—the padded chair was filled, the glass before its occupant was filled also, but many a bottle near at hand was not filled. A hand was reaching out for the glass as the eye caught sight of the form upon the threshold, but it stiffly changed its direction and waived toward a chair near by which stood just as when some one had recently quitted it. The young lord advanced with rapid strides, determined to know if he was a fool or a madman, and put at once an end to this delusion. He took the proffered chair and turned rudely to what seemed to be one who had once been his father in name but never in deed. As he did so another glass was filled and pushed toward him. The face did not flush with rage, as when they had last met, but leered in a ghastly way as it peered forward, while its lips parted, sending forth breath that chilled the heart as well as the cheek it struck.

"Drink that!" said the lips—there was no tongue visi-

ble, the icy breath had come from a hollow behind the white teeth, over which the lips were tightly drawn, and in speaking never curved nor relaxed in tightness—"drink that!"

Not liking the commanding tone in which the late lord in shade addressed the present lord in substance, the latter looked defiance, which the former, knowing he had little time to argue matters, and at the same time get all the wine he thirsted for before he might be summoned into the realms whence he had just come, drawn over by the tightening again of the cords, did not heed, but tapped his long finger upon the table. Instantly one hand from behind took the glass, another opened the young lord's mouth; the first one poured its contents down his throat, the second clapped his upper and lower jaws together, and all so quickly that he had not time nor opportunity for anything but getting the wine from his throat as fast as possible to save himself from strangulation. Instantly the defiant spirit vanished.

He was limp in body, limp in brain, and limpest of all in mind. He could move, but he did not care to; he could think, but he did not find much to think about; he could resist and defy and conquer this thing he had once been taught to call a parent, but it was not worth the trouble. And all this had been done by wine from his own cellar.

The shade, the ghost, the ghoul, the delusion, the fancy of an excited brain—anything he pleased to term his host, for he surely presided here—again tapped, and every chair was filled by his kind, in part his kin; every glass was held up and looked through by every guest, whether with doubt as to cleanliness or with critical eye upon the quality of the material used in the manufacture, the young lord could not tell, and in his limpness little cared.

The glasses had all been raised at once, eyed at once, and put down at once; the corks were drawn—no, they seemed to draw themselves, the bottles to empty themselves, and each to step of its own accord into its place in the row. All was ready, and he of the padded chair arose as near as the lord could make out; at all events,

he was found at right angles to the seat of the chair very suddenly.

From the hollow again came a voice and an icy breath, "Let us drink to the health of the Lord and Lady of Ivandale. Quaff!"

So many lips parted, and showed so many hollows, and freed so many icy breaths, that the glasses clinked with echoes, and the air of the room grew too cold for comfort. The young lord shivered. They all quaffed long and eagerly, then looked to him for reply, for so thirsty and dry were their bony throats that they drank before giving time for response. Their eyes were deep set and rolled constantly up and down, from side to side, backward and forward; some were threaded with red veins so thickly that it was like a network; others were shrivelled and shrunken, others full and glaring. The lord tried to scan their faces closely enough to recognize, if he could, any of his father's old companions in life, many of whom had taken the road he had, and under much the same circumstances they had been forced to step from it; but their faces were like their bodies, if gazed at fixedly—they became transparent, and he could see the chair-backs, and them at the same time. While puzzling himself over this—for the natural vigor of his brain and mind would now and then assert itself over the limpness, and he would begin to try for a solution of this and that, but it was a beginning and an ending at the same time—the limpness crept over him again, and he felt so comfortable that he did not attempt to overcome it.

Again they rolled their eyes toward him for response, but he gave none. Again, said he of the padded chair, "Quaff!" At this each spectre held his right hand to the left hand of his neighbor, touched his glass, and raising as one, they sang with their chill breath—

"To drink your health,
Young lord of wealth,
We've crossed the main
To earth again;
Our barks are tossed
But never lost;
Though waves run high
We're always dry.

Quaff, brothers, quaff!
Quaff deep, quaff long,
Nor break the song;
Quaff long, quaff deep,
Before you leap
Where you must reap;
Quaff, brothers, quaff!
Quaff long, quaff deep!

We drink to one
Who'll bear a son
Who'll never heir
The castle fair;
Of all bereft
You will be left
Within damp halls
And mouldy walls,
Then break away
O'er earth to stray.

Now praises bold
To vintage old:
Quaff, brothers, quaff!
Quaff long, quaff deep;
We'll vigil keep.

And now we sup
Again the cup,
And cry, 'All hail
Lord Ivandale!'
Quaff, brothers, quaff!
Quaff deep, quaff long!"

"Ha, ha, ha! ha, ha, ha! ha, ha, ha!"

And as the last note died away, the last spectre slipped from his chair, and those who were near griffin's claws laid their heads upon them, and those who were not, fell upon the marble floor with a clattering sound which startled the lord, and he opened his eyes just as the butler, knowing daylight put the shades to flight, ventured to open the doors and windows preparatory to clearing the remnants of the feast before his master or mistress should learn of his tardiness.

He saw his master, and turned in flight; but the latter bade him attend him to his room, and under pain of instant dismissal without a farthing, to say nothing of having found him there.

As the lord arose from what he counted a dream, he saw row upon row, in rank, in file, and in dire confusion—bottles that had been brought from the depths of his wine cellar by no butler's hand; for of the rare vintage there found he alone held the key.

The servant looked at the empty bottles, and looked at his master. The latter understood the horror which overspread his face, when, a little after, he saw in the mirror that his hair, the day before black, had been turned to silvery whiteness.

We are recording rumors and not facts which we witnessed, and so we again say, it was a sorry hour for the Lord of Ivandale, and all who then and long after were sheltered by his walls when he ordered the cloth laid in the banqueting-room, for the guests next morning found one who would never again be a man among men. They wondered at his whitened locks, at the lines of hardness which naught but mental suffering could have given in so short a time; and recollecting the dread they had felt the night before, withdrew one by one as courtesy permitted, and the lord and his timid young wife were left alone within walls visible and walls invisible.

Day by day the juttings grew, hour by hour the deeply sunken were farther and farther from sight. Children were born, but were not welcome. Some were wise enough, upon not meeting a cordial reception, to turn back whence they came; others of more pugilistic tendencies fought their way from babyhood to childhood, and scarcely were they entering manhood and womanhood, when one after another they sought from the world what had been denied them at home. One son remained, the only comfort his mother had, and she begged him to stay while she lived; and when one day the poor frightened creature, who had never had an opinion of her own, took the advice of one who had, and silently followed his beckoning, not over the castle walls alone, but behind the veil that hides the immortal from the mortal, she was no doubt glad of the bidding, and more gladly obeyed than she ever had in all her life.

The son saw the coffin lowered, and saw himself cast upon the world within the same hour.

The lord lived on, the mould within growing faster than the mould upon the walls; and as servants worn out in the service laid by their garments to follow, perhaps, in attendance upon their mistress, whom they loved, he never filled their places; and when they grew so small in number that the labor could not be done by them, he closed ante-room and library, boudoir and bedchamber. Hall and corridor were never passed through; turret and tower were never sought; fountain and lake were choked with gathering moss and fallen trees; hound and horse, for lack of exercise, took their last hunt; hare and deer were free as in a wilderness, and the owner built a home for himself underneath them all, where he would remain for days and weeks. From one of these tarries he emerged, gave orders for the reopening of the banquet hall, spread again the board, opened himself the secret wine closet, and with shaking hands arranged its contents for his guests, whom he awaited at mid hour of night.

The songs were so loud, the clattering of the bones against the glasses and against each other were so sharp, the corks drew themselves so like explosives, the breaths were so cold that they penetrated the walls, and chilled in heart and hand the few attendants who in old age had been still faithful to their master, and were forced from fright to follow into that world where so many had gone long before.

Finding himself alone, he traced carefully the history of his children, and their children even; but how he learned of them no one could tell, all the former were dead and many of the latter. Of the heirs of one child he was silent, for that child was the son who loved his mother, and was kind, gentle, pure, frank, and manly, all of which the juttings would fall upon and crush if they could; but as they had tried and failed in this case, bitter hatred followed. Upon these histories he locked, or rather sprung a secret drawer and went forth bowing under the weight of years into the world a wanderer. He found his way back some years after, sought the underground room, and before he wandered again, opened the secret drawer, took out the histories, and in their place laid a parchment which it shall be our pleasure hereafter to peruse, in part at least.

CHAPTER XXI.

"TROUBLE GOES IN THREES, SIR, AFORE THE SPELL IS BROKE."

THE mother of Margaret Ray was the daughter of the youngest and best of the children born to the old lord; he was the only one who had brightened his mother's life, and for it received the curse of his father, and was made an exile from Ivandale. The former he cared not for, and the latter he gladly hailed when the only tie that bound him there had been severed. His mother had hoarded the few hundred pounds that an impecunious father placed in her hands upon her wedding day, and with this scanty sum he started in the race for bread.

That he was successful in this may be inferred from the fact, that under the name of William Seebold—he never claimed blood or title, and why should he?—we, or rather Mr. Trout, with the assistance of Marplot, had traced him to the thriving village of Wenham, made thriving by honest and busy hands, by shrewd brains and hard sense, where he invested so much as was needful in learning to become a maker of those useful instruments called knives and forks, and where he excelled in the manipulation, manufacturing and moulding of all that is needful for the formation of these, from the steel to the bone, ivory, or horn which encase the steel and make what is known as the handle. This last information we volunteer for the benefit of those whose refined sense of the fitness of things may be shocked that a scion of the ancient family of Radnor, sole heir, perhaps, in time of all their heirlooms within the walls and gates of Ivandale, should not have journeyed to London as a gentleman of birth, and after hob-nobbing with his peers and superiors, spending all that he had and borrowing all that he could,

settled down in cheap obscure lodgings, awed by his fellow lodgers as the son of a lord, and visited secretly by a few charitably disposed, who may have supped with his grandfather; that he should not have trod bare floors in rusty velvet slippers, and sat upon unstuffed chairs in gown of ragged brocade, nursing the well tapered fingers through whose veins the blood of generations of elegance and idleness flowed.

As we find the fact that he did not do any of these things a matter of record, the fastidious reader may, perchance, find upon the side of Lady Helen some ancestor who was a mechanic, a tradesman, or else had the good sense to feel he would gladly exchange his life with either of these.

We can always find a reason for anomalies if we try; but the facilities in this case being as accessible to the reader as the writer for showing why this one existed, we will no longer detain him, but return to the heart of the village of Wenham and greet William Seebold.

There, we say, he was successful, for though he trod bare floors, his shoes were whole, though their make-up was perhaps clumsy; he sat upon unstuffed chairs, yet his coat was warm and of guernsey pattern; his hands had browned by exposure, and the taper of the fingers made him able to perform the most delicate work, and mark him among his fellows as a skilled artisan.

From the workman he soon grew to be master, from the master superintendent, from the superintendent proprietor, from proprietor of one he grew to be the centre of many. And he had also grown to be the centre of the happiest, brightest, and prettiest home Wenham had ever seen. Here natural refinement had full scope, and the musical, the artistic, and the literary world was searched for its choicest contributions.

Common sense had filled his pocket by showing him that honest labor alone could aid him when the portals of Ivandale closed; and having done her labor, common sense stood aside and made way for the gratification of other senses.

His wife, noble in heart, noble in soul, and in every way a true woman, drank so freely of this cup of peace,

contentment, and happiness, that while yet in her prime the keel grated upon the sands that bound the Great Beyond, and she stepped quietly ashore, yet not before she knew that the little girl, their only child, so shy and sensitive, so tender and loving, might perhaps some day be lady of the deserted castle, and exacted a promise from her husband that the child should know of it. He who had lived so long under the shadow of the juttings of jealousy, avarice, and hatred, would have renounced all kinship by letting the secret rest beside him when he should follow her.

But the mother, with the womanly fear of something coming in after years with "if" for the premise, and "if" for the conclusion, prevailed upon him to either leave it in available form, or tell Mary when she should be old enough. The former he did, and well it was so, for before she could fully comprehend it, if she had been told, a shadow from his old life reached him, and hatred applied the match to the workshops broad and many-storied, to the office cozy and inviting, to the home elegant and spacious. For years the brain had been taxed, the hands had been busy, the feet active, the heart full of sorrow for the sorrowing; the ear had listened to the cry of humanity and relief given with bountiful hands; but the end came when, mid the lurid glare that arose from the destruction of the long years of patient toil, he saw an old man clapping his hands with joy as the lapping tongues grew longer, and the fiery throats yawned deeper. He sickened at the sight, and closing the eyes to shut it out, they never opened again, and Mary Seebold, with her only legacy, was fatherless, homeless, and penniless.

A mournful group laid beside the recently dead wife the man who had labored side by side with the lowliest, and who equalled in vigor of mind and the stuff of which a true man is made, the greatest among them, mourned by the humble and missed by the high. Many a door was opened to little Mary, but the one she chose to enter belonged to the sturdy Major Ray, who had served in war and in peace, and found the latter the most difficult to do. So, when he saw no immediate prospect of re-

bellion abroad or dissension at home, he left the service and busied himself and everybody who would be made busy by him, in caring for his own and for a goodly estate left by his wife in his trust for their only heir, Richard, who was wild enough to see the world at its gayest, but not wicked enough to be stained by its impurities.

The major drew the reins occasionally, and he came to Wenham, but restive soon under its prosy, plodding life, he threw off restraint and was gone. He had, like his father, a great warm heart beating within, and like his mother a refined attractiveness without.

As Mary grew in years, in grace, and in beauty, he did not wait for the check-rein to call him in ; he came oftener and tarried longer than when no one beside the major and a stiffly-starched, correctly-plaited and never-rumpled old housekeeper was there to welcome him one hour, and the next leave him to entertain himself in any way that seemed best suited to his mood. But this charming little ward of his father regarded him as a most fastidious guest, at the same time he afforded a most agreeable break in the monotonous life she led between propriety of the governess, the starch of the housekeeper, and the whimsical indulgences of the major. So she innocently spared no pains to make him well suited with his old home, and better than he had long been with the village itself. The major saw it all, and was not ill pleased. He once ventured a visit to Ivandale, and amid curses showered upon the child and all who loved her, he learned, that in all probability, the turreted and towered old castle would some day be hers, that is, if the old man who held it should ever slip anchor, which there seemed little intention on his part of ever doing.

Old Major Ray was brusque, busy, and somewhat inclined to be whimsical, but he shot out warm beams from his good heart, that thawed icy natures despite themselves. A lifetime with the old lord would never so melt him, but that he would have congealed again as soon as left to himself. But during his brief stay the visitor so thawed him, on the rim as it were, that tiny streams from his inner self flowed sparingly through, and so gladly did

they seem to flow that their owner begged his guest to prolong his tarrying. This was politely declined under the pressure of home duties.

"Egad," said the major to himself as he rubbed his limbs grown stiff and clumsy with rheumatic twinges, for whose speedy growth damp walls and musty sheets are hot-beds, "I have served in the heat and in the cold, in the mud and in the sand, but dam'me I never felt so queer in my life. I'm as clammy inside as I am out. The devil holds this redoubt, and dam'me again if I don't believe the old fellow here is the devil himself. Mary shall never come here. She'd stifle, poor child. Bright sun and pure air haven't found themselves in here for generations, I know. What shall we do with it? Tear it down and build it over. I'll see to it;" and dreaming of riding one of his hobbies—erecting, adding, and diminishing so rapidly after the erecting, that all trace of the original soon disappeared. He slept within the walls of Ivandale, in the very room, in the very bed, where Lady Helen had so gladly drawn her last breath and acquiesced in the request Death made to follow him. His sleep was troubled; and he was not alone in this, for he heard steps, now in corridor, now in room, once they stopped at his door, and he roared "Who's there?"

A sigh so sad, so touching, was the only reply, and the footsteps passed on. After this he was clammier than ever; there was a stickiness to everything now, even to his nightcap, which he drew over his ears to keep out the sound of the stepping, which increased after the sigh had died away. As he did this he heard a laugh, it was a mocking laugh, which seemed to say—"Nightcap! ha! ha! you can't keep it out with a nightcap," and the steps were legion then, some heavy, some light, but no two together.

"Why in the devil don't you keep time!" called out the major writhing under the inharmony of the stepping. "If you must come, come under better discipline. Now I'll count, if you haven't got a drum with you. Get in line now!"

Such a ha, ha-ing and scampering as followed would have frightened a less courageous man than the major,

but he said to himself again," They are devils, and I don't wonder, it is the best place for them here I ever saw, but they must be put under marching orders, and then I can go to sleep."

"Ready there!"

"Ha! ha! ha!"

"Now, left, right; left, right; left, right."

"Ha! ha! ha! ha!" and the feet came down as one.

"Just keep step now," cried the major, "till I get to sleep. One good turn deserves another. I have shown you how to make your steps musical; now keep good time, and I'll be asleep in a twinkling."

So he was, and when he awakened it was broad daylight. The servant who answered his ring had a scared look, and replied to his questions with a timid air. Mystery, whether real or imaginary, breaks the barrier for a time between the served and serving: so this attendant ventured to ask:

"Did you hear her sigh? Poor thing!"

"Who?"

"Why the mistress. Last night was the night she comes. She don't stay long. They drive her away."

"Who drives her away? asked the major, beginning to think his dreams might have been real after all.

"Them that drinks below stairs. We heard 'em; they marched," said the servant, whispering and shaking his head as if to enjoin a like proceeding upon the guests. "But I can't tarry, or my master will say I'm peachin'. He's jealous, sir; jealous. Do you know aught of the young one he put out? He was good and cheery. We all loved him."

"And well you might," said the major.

"You know him, sir; you know him?" cried the old servant catching at his arm. "Bless him, and where might he be?"

"There is a place where he *might* be, but he ain't there, I know, for folks like him are too good; but the place where he ought to be is the best place we know of—heaven."

"He been't dead?"

"He is."

"Did he leave any behind him?" asked the old man after wiping the tears away with his sleeve.

"One."

"Sorry, sorry. It'll see sad days. Trouble goes in threes, sir, afore the spell is broke," and with bowed head he hurried out, either to carry the news to his fellows, or to give way to the grief that was sincere. Was it a sigh that might still be reverberating from wall to wall; was it the loss of sleep; was it the twinges rheumatic, or was it the words, "Trouble goes in threes afore the spell is broke," that rendered the major uneasy as he made a hasty toilet and followed another attendant that had been sent to show him into the presence of his host, who expressed hope that he had rested well?

Lest the curses with which he had been greeted, when the day before he spoke of Mary, should be repeated if he betrayed the least doubt of having passed a quiet night, he assured him that he was so refreshed as to feel that he had taken a soporific of some kind, and he thought it might be the excellent wine to which he had been treated before retiring.

The old lord eyed him sharply during this allaying of his suspicions, and the major playing so well his part showed never a trace of the clamminess within and without which still lingered about him.

The morning meal was simple in kind but ample in quantity, and served with as much formality as if the host had not been shut up for years, with no other company for months together than these old followers. Their number being small, one did the duties of several, so that it was not surprising to the guest that he of the prophetic words, "Trouble goes in threes afore the spell is broke," should be in attendance. He anticipated his every want, and supplied it with almost tenderness.

The major understood it—the man was thinking of the young master he had loved, and he liked the fellow the better for it, and yet wondered how love of any kind could live in such an atmosphere.

The host soon signified a desire to be left alone with his guest. Watching the closing of the door, listening to the retreating footsteps, and otherwise assuring himself

that no one was near, he sat a long time in silence, sipping now and then from a re-filled cup, but evidently not tasting what he sipped.

"You've got her, you say?" at length he broke abruptly forth.

"Yes," was the reply of the guest, who knew better than to pretend ignorance now of the subject engrossing the attention of the other, "and do not want to part with her. That is not the object of my visit. You know why she came to me. I told you her father died, and—"

"Yes, yes, I saw him shut his eyes. I see him do it every night. I've offered him everything if he would not open them again. But, sir, what do you think he says," cried the old man fiercely interrupting him—"he says when I give him back life and home and the work he was doing, he will shut them on me forever. I can't do that, and so he goes on opening and shutting. I had spirit once, sir, and I would not take insult; but now I am old, and he knows it. But sometimes I call out 'Crowd him back! crowd him back!' when I see him coming. And *they* come; you know them—they came here when I was made Lord of Ivandale, and they have been coming ever since. I was never glad to see them till he came, and now I call them to crowd him back. He says why did I do it? Why? why? ha, ha, ha! ask me why I did not do it long before, better ask that. Could I see him have what I never had? Could I ever love him? I wanted once what he had—a mother's love. I never got it; he did, and I cursed him for it. I was never wanted, and I knew it; I was never loved, and I knew it. He was welcomed and loved, but not by me; no, not by me, but by his mother; and when she was gone I made him go too."

"And if you had not," ventured Major Ray, "he might have given you the love he gave his mother."

"Dare to tell me that, do you." The face grew livid with anger, the fists clenched till the nails sunk into the flesh. "Dare to tell me what he tells me, and at my own table? Dare you? dare you? ha! ha! I'll serve you to the same illumination. I can do it—and all the prettier I can make the fire if you are happy. I like to hear the

flames say, 'Where is your mother-love, your wife-love, and your child-love now?' I like to hear them snap all these loves. They were never, never mine, but if they had, if they had I might be now—"

He did not finish the sentence. Some pitying angel had breathed into his heart, and hatred for the moment gave place, the juttings fell, and the deeply sunken eyes were fuller. Tears that had known his eyes but once before dropped from them upon his cheeks, hands were opened and folded quietly together, the head laid back as if a tender nurse were preparing him for repose, the face looked peaceful after a little time, and exhausted by the workings of anger and hatred he fell asleep.

Could it be the pitying angel touched him as a mother should have done in childhood and boyhood, as a wife would have done in manhood, as children and grandchildren could have done in middle life and in old age? That he was dreaming of what it were possible to be, to have been, if but the touch of the first had been given, for it would have led to the touch of the last? Would that she could have held him forever thus. Physical weakness aided her in her ministrations, but when vigor of body returned, she folded her wings in sorrowful silence, her hands in earnest prayer, and gave way to the hordes that goaded him on to do the work of unsatisfied hatred and revenge.

He awoke with a start and stare, the peaceful look still, and for some time after, upon his face. It was the trailing of the angel's garments, so loth was she to leave him to his yet uncompleted fate.

"You have been resting, friend," said the major, as the old man continued to gaze around in a dazed way. "You and I are not so robust as we were in our fighting days, and rest is needed often." The old soldier was surprised to hear himself put it so mildly; under ordinary circumstances he would have said, "Dam'me, sir, you have been asleep."

By this time the trailing garments were far away, for the peaceful look was fading, dissolving, the hard lines were again hardening, the eye was growing cunning and suspicious, the brow was folding itself in deep frowns, the

mouth was drawing at the corners, the hands getting tremulous, the fingers long and spectral.

"I never take rest," said he shaking his head; "never, never. How can I?" The pitying angel must have taken the dreams with her, for he seemed to have no remembrance of them. Why could she not leave them? Why not give him so much as of light from Beyond? Because they would be lost in the depths of the night in which he groped. There is a dawn for every darkened nature, and good angels watch without wearying for the passing of the midnight hour, that they may thread the horizon with beams however small to show the benighted one that there will be light. The last one to bear the name of Radnor was in the darkest depths, and the dreams could find no place upon the walls of his soul, so the pitying angel sadly bore them away.

The major listened in silence to the raving of his host. It were little use to attempt consolation, it were no use to appeal to reason, for as we have said before, there was none to appeal to, so he wisely waited for a quiet in the storm to remind him that he had not yet had opportunity to announce the object of his visit.

"Ha! ha! and you, too, have an object," laughed the old lord. "Everybody has an object. He has an object in opening and shutting his eyes on me. He thinks that I will give him back all that the flames snapped and crackled. It sounded good. I hear it now: snap! crackle! snap! crackle!"

"Dam'me," said the major to himself, "I don't know what to do with an enemy I can't blaze away at. He's too old first, and he's too crack-brained second, and everything here is too damp and rheumatic third, and Mary don't want the gloomy place fourth. I've got enough for her. This ain't worth the powder, after she gets it. I'll make my will and the child shall have all that's mine. I've got nobody else to leave it to. Richard's well enough off with the Glentworth estate under my management, and brother Tom's well enough off too. Let him alone with his curses. He ain't worth the powder."

While he was working himself into this conclusion his

host was working himself into such a frenzy as his excited brain wrought scenes that had been and scenes that might have been, scenes that were probable and scenes that were possible, all fatal to something or somebody—that the attendant was summoned and the master borne to his own apartment. Glad of the opportunity to let the object be an object still, the major ordered his horse, left his regrets for his host's illness, and the necessity for his own speedy departure, and breathed freely only when out of sight of the moss-grown statues, the untrained hedges, and the lopping branches of the stately trees that were once the pride and glory of Ivandale.

Before doing this the old servant sought and timidly asked him if the one left was girl or boy.

"As sweet a girl as ever sun shone on," was the hearty reply, "and my good fellow if you ever find need of creeping out of this musty, crusty old cover, come to me and you shall see her for yourself."

"Thank ye, sir," returned the servant sadly. "I can't leave him. He's got only three on us left. But I'm glad she's not a boy, sir. The spell breaks sooner on the girl. Poor thing! poor thing! It grows shorter and shorter on every girl. If she leave one it won't follow her all her life. Be good to her, sir; he was good to me, the young master was. I loved him, sir, and it's little these walls have ever seen to love." Handing up the reins with trembling fingers, a great sob filling him and choking further utterance, he stood directly in the bridle-path, as if he would keep his master's guest as long as he could. It might be, he thought, the last gleam from the outer world he should ever see.

"She will never come to harm while I command," said the major, touched with the man's solicitude for the child he had never seen.

"Cheer up, cheer up, my fellow, and don't prophesy so much evil; you're mouldy, mouldy; rub it off! rub it off! How long before your master will rally, for I take it, by the way you lugged him off the field, that it's not the first time?"

"No, no; when he works himself up they always comes to this. And weeks mebbe afore he'll come to.

They'll give him a song—ah, I can hear 'em now—and then he'll be gone a long time. You don't know, sir; you don't, what I know, sir."

"No, and I don't want to; let me over the lines and dam'me if ever I play scout again. Let go his head." And spur and whip were not needed; the steed was as glad of freedom as the master.

It has never been recorded as a fact, but it might be inferred that the object of the visit of Major Ray was the perfectly laudable, plausible, and pleasant one of informing the last of the Radnors that the first of the Seebolds would speedily become the wife of Richard Ray.

Upon her wedding day, Mary was told of her ancestry, of her legacy, but not of the curse. Few attended the marriage in the little church, but one more than was invited. It was a happy union for a few years, and then the shadow came. The major saw it gathering upon the once bright happy face of Mary, upon the frank manly face of Richard; and before either had confessed it to him, the former with her child, Margaret, had gone.

Search proved in vain, and Richard, a broken-hearted, broken-spirited man, found solace in the life his father had loved in early years. The major was left in a desolate home, ever conning the prophecy, "Trouble goes in threes, sir, afore the spell is broke." That it was broke he never lived to see. The Glentworth estate was left to little Margaret if she should ever be found, if not it fell to the daughter of his only brother; in case of her death it fell to a distant heir, not much prized by the major.

And this was the Margaret Ray sought for by Mr. Trout, the honest and well reputed; by Marplot, the oily and eely; by Joe, the honest and faithful; by Harold, who could straighten out for others as well as himself; and not least by Mr. Wallace, who looked for fair play.

CHAPTER XXII.

SHOWING THE CHILD THAT LIFE IS NOT ONE LONG PLAYDAY.

His bread was sometimes bought by rewards, his sail was often repaired by the sale of dead men's shoes, his worn-out coat often replaced by the stronger, finer covering of one who had exchanged his earthly garment for a robe fitted for him alone.

The bread had been freely shared with the little Meg whom he had found sleeping peacefully upon the shore while her mother floated quietly upon the tide; the sail was trimmed and reefed, unfurled and spread, just as wind, tide, and the floating something demanded; the coat was often shared with Gaff when he was younger or when the return voyage was weary, if the something was weighty, and it had also been wrapped about Meg when she was younger, too, and had stolen down to the shore to watch for their coming.

The water always held for the child a strange fascination, and when Peleg and Martha once proposed to send her where she would "git manners that become her," said the latter, "and handy with letters and figgers," said the former, the child begged them not to take her from the shore.

"But it ain't where ye ought to be," argued Martha one day, "here in Wreckers Court. Yer a lady born, and must be a lady bred."

"I ain't, I ain't," cried Meg. "I'm uncle's Meg; he said I was since the river washed her away where I can't see her. She tells me to stay where I can hear it wash in the night. I'll go down now and look for Snatcher. It's time for her, and I'll ask uncle if you're going to send me away from here."

Catching up a little slat bonnet she was gone before Martha could present another and more forcible side to the question under advisement. The Wreckers stood aside respectfully ; the vermin who always huddle on and about the quays of a populous city, huddled closer as she passed. Instinctively they recognized her innocence and purity, and that she was not one of them, and a lifetime among them could not make her such.

The sun was shining on the water, and this it did not always do. She shielded her eyes with one hand, and with the other beckoned to a spread sail, stamped her foot impatiently that her signal was not returned, and when at last it was, she danced for joy. By barge and sloop, by barque and schooner, in here and out there, it found its way, sometimes borne back by the swell of one, sometimes carried forward by the heave of another, till at last having no use for its sail, so intricate became its way, it was pulled to by the sturdy oars of Peleg and the feebler ones of Gaff, who was just beginning to take short predatory trips by day preparatory to longer ones thereafter by night.

Since Jane had rowed across a wider and clearer river, Mr. Hamper had recognized the need of promoting Gaff to first mate, as soon as his qualifications would permit. For awhile he afforded a partner, but that necessarily caused a division of the rewards, half the shoes, or half the proceeds of their sales, and the giving of every other coat. He had pulled for years, he and Jane, against wind, tide, current, and heave, all dead against them at times, and at other times, only the wind and current, while the tide and heave helped them on ; but they cared not so much for this opposition, which perseverence and nerve would overcome in the long run, but what they most feared was wind, tide, current, and heave all quiet—a dead calm, nothing to do and nothing to eat. They had been on such voyages, but it was when they were fresh and vigorous. Before Jane went they had found Meg, and found one supposed to be her mother, but they had beaten the calm into wind, tide, current, and heave before, so that the delicate little mouth was filled with bread of a finer grain, milk of purer quality, and

meat of finer fibre than they had for themselves in the larder. "It took such a mite of anything," Jane said, to feed her, that they did not mind the extra pennyworth of this or that.

She grew as she pleased, played as she pleased, thought as she pleased, and being never much displeased about anything, had her own way with Jane, who, owing to her position as first mate on Snatcher, found she could not give her proper care, so she was sent to Sister Martha's; and when Jane failed to return from across the clear wide river spoken of, Martha and Meg took up their abiding at No. 2 Wreckers Court, and there we find them, Martha stirring vigorously a pot of soup, and Meg inhaling savors and weaving fantastic things out of its curling steam from a low stool by the fire.

The pros and cons were short and quickly ended by Meg, who always referred knotty questions to uncle, but was sure to preface them by stating her own views and wishes, and there the matter might have rested, for Peleg never ventured to cross her.

"She's got a clean, clear eye," he always said, "and can scan a snag along shore sooner than Marthy and me."

Here was the most momentous question yet, and she wanted to talk it on the water, too; so, hardly had they pulled to, before she put out her hands to be taken in. Peleg, always glad to see her and indulge her whims, never mind how weary and hungry he was, reached up and took her to the ill-fitting coat, coarse shirt, tawny breast, and great pulsing, loving heart.

"And now, wot be agin my Meg?" said he pressing with his rough hand the little brown head upon the coat, which must have sent the thrill to the shirt, which in turn gave it to the breast, and this to the heart, for the latter bumped and thumped so that the coat and shirt had to keep time to its throbs. She did not once reply, but springing from his arms alighted upon the driftwood with which Snatcher was loaded, the richest something which the water had that day thrown up to them, and shaking Gaff, who was rubbing his shins and whining over what Martha called his "growin' pains," which to a close observer might be noticed to come upon him when there was

a heavy prospective tax upon his energy; here was the wood to be backed, or dragged to Wreckers Court a few squares away, and why should he not find it just the time for growing and the pain attendant upon this outstretching of nature. To be just to Gaff, he never flinched at any call upon the water, however hard, long, or dangerous; but there he considered his duty done, and the minute Snatcher was made fast, he proceeded to make himself fast too: sometimes it was to a warm dry corner on the quay, where he could watch the play of the muddy waters; sometimes it was upon the doorstep of No. 2, if the sun was well warming it; sometimes it was in the little room where "Dad" rowed himself into the white shirt; but wherever it was, it was not in a state of much activity.

"Gaff! Gaff!" cried Meg to make herself heard above the splashing, puffing, ringing, and bustling near by, and shaking so heartily as to endanger herself to a fall from the wood, "there's a good boy; Mother Martha wants onions and herbs for the most delicious soup you ever tasted; I can smell it now." And the little nose sniffed, and the little mouth smacked with such force, that Gaff, who never drew much on his imagination, drew up his nose as if he could smell it too; but there he stopped, the nostrils came down, as practical nostrils should do, and the sniff was not taken till later when he actually stood over the boiling pot.

"Bother," said he; "I don't smell it if ye do. Mebbe yer satisfied with that kind o' smell, but I been't."

We are not as intimately acquainted with Gaff in his after-life as with some of the others whose history we pen, but we think it safe to presume that the above was the first and only time but once that he ever let fancy have play, and that once we shall likewise record.

"I'll tell you," said Meg, "just how to be satisfied: run quick to the shop at the corner of the court, and get the herbs and onions and put them in the pot, then you will smell what's worth smelling. Ah! it's good. You see, Gaff, uncle's going to take me up and down the river a bit, and I told Mother Martha I'd get the things, the onions and herbs, you know, and we got to talking and smelling,

and it smelt so good, I forgot them till I got down here. Now, hurry ashore, there's a good boy. Mother Martha's good to me, and I must be good to her."

Meg had touched Gaff on the most vulnerable subject —soup, and, above all, soup made by Martha.

It was good for the sick and the well, for the weak and the strong; it had been given when digestion was so feeble that but a spoonful, and diluted at that, could be taken at the first taste; but such were its wonderful properties that the spoonful was not diluted at the second taste, and doubled, trebled, and even fed freely at the third; it had been given by the pailful to those hungrier and poorer than herself; it had been sent for, with ample price, by those who need never be hungry and were not poor; those whom she had nursed when sick in reality, and when sick because time hung heavy, and tired out with every other diversion they knew not what other tack to take. Thus it was, "Miss Hamper's soup" was sought for by the well-to-do, and received humbly and thankfully by the not-well-to-do, and eagerly grasped for, but it is hoped quite as gratefully, by those who did not do at all.

Gaff was of a nature that always wanted others to feel that he did everything reluctantly, so, of course, he must make an objection, indirectly, to this proposed trip "up and down the river a bit," by saying, "What's to become o' the wood?"

"Just let it be here in the boat," said Meg, "it'll be fun. They'll look at us from the barges and sloops and wonder if I helped uncle get the load. Hurry ashore, Gaff, and you'll soon smell it," and she gave him a little push that helped him along more speedily than he was wont to go.

"He forgets the growing pains when he thinks about Mother Martha's soup, don't he uncle?" she laughed turning to Mr. Hamper, who, when she sprang from his arms to shake Gaff, thought he would lose no time but begin the unloading of the driftwood at once. He had hold of one stick, and was just about to heave it over and up, when he heard her say that he was going to take her up and down the river a bit. The statement was as new

to him as to Gaff, but he did not question its credibility, for the authority was not in his estimation to be doubted, so he let go and waited for further orders. They came soon, he knew they would.

"Let me see," said she thoughtfully, pulling at the slat bonnet's tie-string; "let me think—Loose her there! haul her off! make ready! there she goes! easy now! I knew I could say it all. Didn't I say it just like you, uncle? But why didn't you loose her and haul her off and all the rest just as I said them? Now, I must say them all again. Let's make ready first this time."

The gestures, the voice, the manner, the everything were so completely mimicked, that Mr. Hamper let go the rope he was just loosening, and his hearty "haw, haw, haw!" accompanied with a vigorous slapping of his great hands, startled those on shore, and off, who were near enough, we might have said far enough, to hear, for his lungs were as well developed as his heart was kind, his respirations as deep as the pulsations were strong, and the laugh was like all else he did, uttered with all his might.

"Now, that be better done 'n I could do it, Meg. I be glad to see yo'r light in the 'eart agen, child. I thought ye looked down at the 'eel, pullin' up stream like, when ye jumped aboard."

The shadow fell lightly over the child's face as she said, "Never mind now, uncle, we'll talk about it all amid-stream. Did you make ready?"

"Yes, ready," laughed Mr. Hamper again, but not quite so boisterously, and pulled in the rope.

"Haul her off now," cried Meg, from a seat always kept for her in the prow. Mr. Hamper struck a pile with the blade of the long, strong paddle, pushed, the boat rocked, Meg held on to the sides; he stretched farther and pushed stronger till the pile was beyond reach of the blade; the boat rocked again, this time to the water's edge, and a little beyond, for Meg's hands were wet. Mr. Hamper sat down amid the driftwood, swung the paddle to the right, drew its fellow from the bottom of the boat, and swung that to the left.

"Easy now," cried Meg, "easy there," as Snatcher

turned about and put out straight for the middle of the river.

There was no time to talk till they were beyond the craft of all kinds that crowded near the quays, some waiting to unload, and others already laden waiting to sail off or steam off; but why they wait is a question the landsman never finds satisfactorily answered; at all events we know they always have waited, and no doubt always will. Some vague idea of such seemingly unnecessary lingering off shore must have been passing through Meg's mind, for at every one of these inactive, well-anchored, that they passed, she shook her little fist and said, "I wish you would get out of our way, you lazy thing. I want to talk to uncle, and I can't till he can listen. It takes me now all the time to look for you big things that don't move out of our way, and the little things that get right in our way. Boat ahoy!" and she clapped her hands at the success she was having in airing her nautical learning. Mr. Hamper pretended to be guided by her directions, but really kept a close lookout till they were below their starting-point, and where the craft were fewer, though just as idle as the rest. He rested one paddle and let the ebb carry them down, guiding Snatcher now and then with the paddle not at rest.

"Now, child, 'eave yer cargo; make clean work of it, too," said the owner of the great pulsing, loving heart, patting the little hand that held on still to the boat's side.

The slat bonnet drooped a little, the strings that Mother Martha always kept smooth with starch and iron were tied and untied, twisted on the finger and off the finger, till with a quick movement the bonnet looked up and a voice tremulous and tearful said, "I don't want to leave you and Mother Martha. I ain't a lady, and I won't be a lady bred as Mother Martha says I am. I'm Meg, Meg Hamper, and if you and Mother Martha's good enough to live with now, you're good enough to live with bime-by."

Peleg Hamper's first impulse was to laugh aloud and say, "If that be all, Meg, y've got for cargo, 'tain't worth pullin' out 'ere for." But this child had given him a keener inlook into children's hearts than most men take.

After all, it may have been as much in him as in her. She was sensitive and confiding; he had been endowed with a subtle something which made him recognize the sensitive nature and respect its sorrow and joys with just as much gravity as he would those that come in later years.

It was this recognition and respect which drew Meg to him. Neither knew then, and probably never after, what it was.

"Why child," said he, looking out apparently for approaching craft, but really to wink away the veil before his eyes, "it ud cost me many a moan to see ye go for good; but Marthy and me thought it be time ye war sailin' into letters and figgers, and I didn't tell Marthy, but if we could git the riggin' to our mind and yourn, I'd like to see ye 'eaded well into some sort of music. Marthy ud say I carried too much sail for my craft; but ye see, Meg, child, when ye war found ye 'ad a bit o' money tied round yer waist, and that's been well laid in port ever sence. Says I to Jane she be none on us. Ye can see by the foot, the 'and, and the whole build and rig, and if she stays with us she'll 'ave lots o' wants, and this'll buy 'em. So we laid it in a port that keeps it, and pays ye for keepin' it. I never could just see how it all war, for I thought it'd look better for me to pay 'em for the bother o' lookin' after it, but they said no; so I thought I wouldn't dispute 'em, and they do pay it, for I gets it to buy the rigs, Meg, what Marthy said ye must 'ave, that we couldn't buy. But I ain't took much on it, so it makes t'other that much bigger, and the more to make y' a lady with."

"But I don't want to be a lady, uncle, unless the rest will be too," returned Meg, much affected by the disclosure of having means all her own. "I don't want to sail in figures and music; I'd rather sail here with you."

"Ye don't zactly sail in them things," returned Hamper, "that be the way I 'ad a puttin' it. Ye gits books, and looks at 'em till after y've looked at 'em long anuff ye can tell what they means. But ye 'ave to git learnt 'ow to look the right way, for I've looked many a time when I war younger, and the more I looked the more

mixed things got, till I couldn't tell the 'ulk from the jib. Y' see no two on 'em be 'eaded the same way, that be wot pestered me so. But it won't be so with ye, Meg, yer a different build. The letters and figgers 'll all pull together and make a clean cut through the water. Yer rigged for sich. It be in the build, and them that ain't got it can't make it, with all the sails and paddles ye can find. Don't say music to Marthy, she been't so much up in them things, and thinks a craft be jest as good for carryin' if it ain't quite so much figger-headed. But Meg, child, I allus said be ready for every turn o' the wind and the tide; ye never know which'll do ye the most good. Ye see, Meg, it might be yer uncle might 'ave to paddle along shore after Jane when 'e didn't want to, and then ye might be left with only the bit o' money, the few pounds it might be then, and ye'd 'ave nobody to tow yer craft; and I thought, but I didn't tell it to Marthy, that y' might tell what ye knowed to some folks' children, and git anuff for bread while ye kep' the few pounds in port to buy riggin' with. Now, child, I be only lookin' for snags. I doesn't see 'em yet, but they may be there when we git farther up stream. Ye see what I means, child? I know ye does, ye've sich a clear eye," and the sleeve of the rough ill-fitting coat was drawn across the eyes. It could not have been the memory of Jane, for that, although a tender subject with Peleg, had ceased to dim his vision; it could not have been that the wind cut a bit keen, although he murmured something to that effect as the sleeve was withdrawn. But if he had noticed well, he would have found there was no wind at all, so it must have been a cutting of the heart, and keener, too, such cuts are than were ever given by wind. It cut him to think he must throw a shadow over the tender little thing in the slat bonnet; that he must warn her of snag and shoal, bar and beacon. He had known for some time this must be, and every day that drew it near, had made the good-bye more tremulous, the paddle more shaky as he bore against the piles, and the home-coming more hearty, the press of the little brown head on the coat more lingering, for, said he to himself, "She's a leddy born, we know, and if she gits to be a leddy bred, we don't

know—I've 'eard sometimes 'ow they cut loose from them that's been good to 'em, and if she should, if she should—" He never finished, though he *often* got as far, for a sob, a choke, and a draw of the coat sleeve always prevented.

"I see," he continued "ye can't draw quite in sich deep water." For Meg had thrown back her bonnet and sat looking at him as if she was dreaming, and knew she was, but could not waken.

The lips were parted, showing the pretty white teeth; the eyes were wide open, showing them full, large, brown, and just then replete with wonder; the face was round, chubby, and healthy; the head bent forward in eagerness to catch every word; the hands small, well shaped, browned by the sun and water, catching now and then at the slipping bonnet; the frock was of coarse threads, the color neither a drab, a coffee nor a snuff, perhaps a mixture of these would have made it, and perhaps it would have fallen far short of it—upon a little meditation we should say it came nearer to a nankeen, but whatever the color, the stuff was neat and well fitting—Martha Hamper never had anything else pass from her fingers; a large blue pinafore, high in the neck and long in the sleeves, with a broad tie-string in the back, nearly covered the nankeen, if we decide upon that as the shade of the frock. In this costume she might not have differed from some of the better off of the court. But we have not yet given the distinguishing feature, the one thing that told she was not a Wrecker by birth—this was the white ruff about the neck; she never appeared in doors or out without it. To be sure, it was neither of fine cambric nor dainty dimity, but it was always white as the falling snow. Starched stiff and smoothly ironed, it was plaited, not gathered, for in the former Mother Martha could better show her expertness with the iron. Plenty of changes of these, plain ones for week-days, with one trimmed with a worked edge for Sunday, was one of Martha's extravagances—and good soul, she had had little enough of the ornamental all her life, so we are glad she could ride this hobby, ruff though it be, successfully.

There sat little Meg slowly coming out of the dream, and slowly realizing that the time might come when uncle

would be gone, Snatcher would be gone, and then what would there be left for her?

This drawing back the veil, this parting the ideal and the real, this showing the child that life is not one long playday, that he will not always be shielded by a father's strength and a mother's tenderness, but is growing in stature and vigor only the better to buffet with life and life's never-ending buffets against him—this is when the castles begin to shake at the foundation and never after find a firm basis—they are built, to be sure, but the stones are laid less surely, the mortar clings less closely, and they seldom reach roof and tower.

At last said the child, clinging still to the one idea she could clearly comprehend, "Must I leave you, uncle? I help Mother Martha, she says I do; maybe I make more work than I do. But I know she'd be lonesome, and she says as soon as I'm a mite bigger, she can go out to nurse again, and I can keep house while she's gone. Now that'll be nice," and the little form straightened up with dignity at the prospect of being for the time mistress of a home, even though it were a no more pretentious one than that of No. 2 Wreckers Court.

"It be all well anuff now, Meg, but if I don't show ye this, and git ye 'eaded right, ye'll see some day that Wreckers Court was a curse to ye and not a blessin'. I want ye to see the day, child, when ye'll say, 'Uncle war right;' and if ye go on this way without a 'elm, ye'll say ye'd better a been with 'er, floatin' so quiet-like, than 'ave put into Wreckers Court. It be the first time I ever turned ye out o' yer course, and it's 'ard to do it; but ye must be bred as ye war born. I can't bear to part with ye, Meg; the paddles 'll be idle many a time, and Snatcher 'll drift where she oughtn't to, thinkin' o' ye."

The paddles were already idle, and Snatcher was already drifting, for the shaggy head, crowned by a hat too large for the wearer, and sadly showing the action of wind, tide, current, and heave, fell upon the arm covered by the rough coat-sleeve and the veil which dimmed the vision this time, drew itself together and fell—tears.

"Uncle," said Meg, as the veil fell also from her eyes, "I know what we'll do. We'll let the letters and

figures come to the court, and I can look at 'em just as well there as anywhere; and when I learn to look at them the right way, I'll show you how, and we can tell what they mean together. Now, let's laugh and play, there are no such things as letters and figures. I don't see what they were ever made for if they make such trouble." So quickly childhood dispels the shadow.

"But, Meg," returned Hamper not so readily disposing of the vexed question, "mebbe the letters and figgers wouldn't come to the court. Ye can't tell, child. They might draw too deep water for that. But I'll do as ye wants, and we'll bother no more, but ask Marthy if any o' the folks she knows can tell us what to do."

"That's it! that's just it!" she cried, splashing the water with her hands. "But wait till we've all had some soup and told her how good it is. It will be overdone when we get home, and she'll be a little vexed. She's always on time, you know."

"Yes, Marthy be allus doin' a square thing, and thinks everybody else might, too."

'Easy now," said Meg, "and we'll soon smell it." And Snatcher turned, the oars dipped, dipped, dipped. Meg was silent, but thinking, thinking, thinking. Peleg could do neither solely, so between dipping and thinking, dipping and thinking, dipping and thinking, he steered to the quay, the court, the soup, and the advice of Mother Martha.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LETTERS, "FIGGERS," MANNERS, AND MEG BEGIN THEIR VOYAGE.

THRIFT, poverty and Martha Hamper had always been forced to dwell beneath the same roof; but thrift and Martha always held the most tricks, and so managed to euchre poverty out of many a hand that she would gladly show. Poverty showed bare walls, curtainless windows,

rough tables, and chairs, some with bottoms and some without. Thrift and Martha, with an honorable understanding of the hand each other held, so skilfully played their trumps, that poverty, although not wholly beaten and ready any time to show "a spot," if nothing more, was kept well subdued by a few homely prints upon the walls which made it "kind o' cheery like;" by a bit of paper on the upper half of the window, and a clean, smooth bit of white cloth upon a draw-string on the lower half; by a daily friction upon the tables with brush, sand, and water until the rough had become the smooth; by a tacking on at regular intervals of bright and sombre bits of woollen which had been given by those whom she nursed, and these going from front to back, and side to side, passed each other over and under, so that after a firm tacking again of each bit when its journey across was ended, a close, soft seat was given to many a chair, that poverty would have left with a yawning not at all inviting to one weary upon foot, and looking about for rest.

It was in this wise that thrift and Martha euchred poverty, we say; for to a not critical gazer, the room had an air of comfort that gave one the idea of plenty not consistent with the known contents of Martha Hamper's pocket, which in the days when she lived alone in Poorly's Resort was often so scant that shake it anyway you might it would not jingle, for if happily one shilling were found there after the week's rent, and the small score at the green-grocer's had been cancelled, there was not another to hit it, and how could one jingle alone?

Yet the good creature always found some one who was poorer than herself, and not a hard matter to do in Poorly's Resort. And her charity was not confined to the needy near. She had a wide circuit, and fortune sometimes favored her by bringing to the bedside of the suffering, and coming at the same hour with herself, those with means as well as hearts, who always recognized the willing hand, the delicate touch, and the cheery manner, and when they or their friends needed such ministrations, but upon softer beds, and neath finer covering, they spoke for Martha Hamper a good word. Thus she climbed

from the low to the high, from the poor to the more wealthy, but never forgot the low and the poor.

It was after these fortunate calls that the pocket's contents could jingle for the first time, and thrift triumphantly shake its hand at poverty and offer to play it alone. It sometimes happened that two were needed, or at least those of means thought so, and upon one of these occasions Susan Thump had been called in to aid Martha by day or by night, whichever way they chose to arrange matters, from which time they were hand in hand, heart to heart, and whenever Nurse Thump had a call she could not fill, she always referred the patient to Nurse Hamper, and indeed it was whispered that when the former knew that the latter was far more needy than herself, she had played some fees that were sure to be prompt and fat into Martha's hands by pleading a probable engagement, which was not at all possible.

So, when Meg fell into her home, Martha had set poverty quite at defiance by having "put into port," as Peleg said, several pounds without interfering with the relief fund she always kept near at hand.

Jane did not long hold her position as first mate regularly and captain at times upon Snatcher, after the removal of the child, and they returned to Wreckers Court. Peleg had paid Martha what he could spare for her keeping, and the rest she had provided herself; but when they became one family he provided for all, and when Gaff was old enough to help him, felt that he was not a whit the poorer for the one more mouth, though its food was finer than theirs.

Between Mother Martha and Meg there was a fondness nothing could ever dispel, but it lacked that confidence which accompanied the love between Peleg and Meg, and the child soon learned this; and although she "talked her heart," as she called it, to Mother Martha, she felt that she was not understood, especially when as she grew older she fell into the moods which now and then would come spite of all she could do. But a pat upon the head, at such times, from uncle's rough, gritty hand, or a drawing of her cloak, if she met him on shore, or a "Meg, child, I want to see light in yer eye soon," dispelled the

shadow, silenced the washing, washing, sooner than ought else.

Thus they had lived till Meg was nearing eight and Gaff fourteen, and the question of birth having been settled without their advice, circumstances had thrown the question of breeding upon Mr. and Miss Hamper, so far, at least, as Meg was concerned. Of the birth of Gaff Mr. Hamper had been consulted, and was therefore prepared for his breeding; but this child of refinement, purity, and finer stuff than is the luck of many, must be fitted as best they could fit her, for what some day might be hers—a life better suited to her nature.

When the voyagers reached the court, Gaff, whom they found upon the step of No 2, was sent to guard the driftwood, while they sat down to the savory soup which Mother Martha now and then declared, with a little toss of the head, "might have been better if it had been eaten sooner."

"It be good enough, Marthy," said Hamper, "whenever ye eats it. I would set yer soup agin all the soups in London. Another thing makes it better, ye be sure that yer gittin' wot y' thinks ye be. No biled rags, Marthy, 'ere. Haw! haw!"

Here the speaker had quite forgot himself, a thing he seldom did, for turning to Meg he said gently,

"Beg yer pardon, child, I forgot—" He did not want to say "ye war 'ere," but had got so far as to half commit himself to that effect; so he took a large spoonful of soup, hoping while swallowing it, to think of something else to say, but Meg relieved him.

"Uncle, you can't say anything to turn me from what Mother Martha makes. I know, too, what it is; so let's eat while it's hot, for you know we must talk with her, so I needn't go away from you both. The letters and figures, you remember, uncle."

"Yes, yes, child," and the mouth of no mean dimensions opened widely, at least enough so to admit a wooden spoon, the especial property of Peleg, it being of sufficient size to hold what some might be pleased to call a ladleful. However, it was none too much for the mouth and the organs directly behind it.

Meg's spoon was small, pewter to be sure, but it took up the draughts just as greedily, though with more grace and less swooping of the lips. The soup was clear, yet tasted of everything under the sun that should be found in a good soup; it was thick, that is, it was not thin, and yet you could not find anything in it that seemed to have performed that mysterious office known only to the cook, thickening.

They had not the refinement of tureen or soup plates, but they had as white a cloth as ever these rested upon. They had a large clean bowl in the centre, one of a little less size before Mr. Hamper, and one of much smaller proportions before Meg, and a plate of bread neatly cut accompanied each; that by the latter was white and fine, that by the former a few shades darker and several grains coarser, a glass of milk for one, a bowl of water for the other, and not in all London was a more contented pair at that hour to be found; the one with her feet swinging to and fro from her high stool, the other with water-soaked boots firmly set upon a woollen rug that covered his place upon the clean boarded floor.

When the large centre piece had been emptied for the third time, due chiefly to Mr. Hamper's vigorous efforts with the wooden spoon, Martha undid the bib around Meg's neck, replaced the ruff which tidiness suggested should be removed at meal-time, and after Meg had washed face and hands, Mother Martha told her to sit down and rest, for she looked weary. Peleg glanced longingly at the pipe upon the shelf in the corner; but as the smoke from such an instrument and white curtains could not dwell together in unity, or rather would form such a union as would render the latter anything but white, he dare not fill and light only when the walls and doors of No. 2 were between him and the curtains.

"Now," said Martha laughing a knowing laugh, as she always did when she thought Peleg and Meg would be obliged to score one in her favor, "you had your talk, and a long one I suppose it be, and do you know now what to do?"

"We thought," returned Peleg, as if conscious that she was possessed of some hidden knowledge—"we

thought we'd ask yer opinion, Marthy ; we didn't see the way quite so clear a 'ead as we might. A bit befogged we got, didn't we, child ?"

"Yes," replied Meg, somewhat embarrassed that she had so positively declared uncle able to settle the question, and after all it had been brought back to Mother Martha for arbitration. But she soon overcame this feeling, for she looked up coaxingly from the little stool and added, "But, Mother Martha, we tried to make it so the letters and figures could—"

"And manners," added Miss Hamper, "and manners too."

"So the letters, figures, and—and manners," repeated Meg—the last a little hesitatingly, with a look at Peleg which said, "You didn't say anything about them—could come to the court, so I wouldn't be sent away."

"It's just like I said," returned Martha again laughing. "You come back to me after all your talks. Now, I'm not quite of a mind what to do, and you ain't of a mind at all. So, Meg dear, if you'll keep the house I'll see Miss Thump, of Lunley Lane, and she can tell me. Samuel is well up in letters, figgers, and manners, but I don't know where he gets 'em. I'll find that out this very afternoon, and carry a dish of soup, too."

The house was brown with paint, not with time, although the latter may have given an extra shade to the paint ; the windows were well polished, and the door was ornamented by a brass knocker made presumably to imitate the head of a sphinx, at least *we* will presume that, and inquire not into the designs of its designer, lest he should declare them to be something quite unlike. Beneath the sphinx, on little brass hooks driven neatly into the door's panels, hung slender brass rings, which held suspended from them, in turn, a large placard of drawing-board, on which, in sizable ornamental letters, with many scrolls, scrawls, curves, and quavers, at the corners, the top and the bottom of the placard, could be ascertained the fact that beyond this door could be seen "Miss P. Barley, Instructress of Children and Youth, Male and Female."

The first, last, and only time as yet that the reader has

met Miss Barley was upon the occasion of her withdrawal from the window of the second-floor front and almost simultaneous appearance, with outstretched arm, within the street doorway of the first floor, where she grasped firmly by the coat collar Mr. Tom Barley, shook him warmly, and, like the puppy he was, swung him into the house.

Such an action performed so easily and agilely may have excited wonder in the mind of the reader, but after seeing the above placard he will readily trace the training of the muscle, from the daily grasping, shaking, and swinging of the boy of light weight, to the youth of such considerable heft that one of Tom's avoirdupois was quickly mastered.

It was as much metal as muscle with Miss P. Barley. Many a woman had as much and even more of the latter, but failed, or would have failed, if the attempt had been to accomplish what she did, because lacking the former. Metal is more to a woman than muscle, but when both are strong, as was the case with Miss Barley, let "children" and "youth" beware, let young men and old have care. It was doubtless a remembrance of these—metal and muscle—which led Isaac Harold to partially conceal himself by the nearest corner, the day on which he helped Tom Barley to the entrance on Cheatem Street. And he was not the only one who in after years would have ventured no nearer if there were any signs of the immediate exercise of either or both of these.

A few days after Miss Hamper had called, with a dish of soup, upon Miss Thump, whose son Samuel had been declared "well up in letters, figgers and manners," little Meg, in a fresh nankeen frock, new blue pinafore, and just "done up" yellow slat bonnet and white ruff, was demurely and thoughtfully holding Martha's hand and passing out of the court, and in some measure, out of the old life.

She would return to the court day after day, and it would be unchanged; she would return to the old life, but it would never look exactly the same. That it would grow to be so distasteful that a separation would come. Mr. Hamper had fears, and hinted as much when he

took her again to the ill-fitting coat, just before she took Martha's hand and said tremblingly,

"Meg, ye'll see craft now that ye never seed afore, but remember them that 'ave towed ye so far up stream. The new uns 'll sail near in fair weather, but they'll never look for ye in a storm ; it's the old uns that 'll never see ye sink. Good bye, Meg, I'll think on ye all day, but it won't bring the moan I feared it might, for I'll find ye 'ere when I come back. Look well to the letters, figgers, and manners, child ; good bye," and the hand which was rougher than the coat pressed for a moment the little brown head, while something dropped upon the ruff, rolled off upon the pinafore, and made a deep spot for the moment upon its blue.

"You're afraid, you're afraid, uncle," returned Meg, nestling into the rough coat, "that the letters, figures, and manners will take me away from you. They can't do it, they can't do it. I don't care how big they are, I'll fight them, if they try to. I'm your Meg, and I'll tell them so." At this the head rose defiantly, and shook itself at the imaginary enemies, letters, figures, and manners, and having subdued these to its satisfaction, the little hand stroked the bristly face. And did it know it ? the great pulsing heart, too, which so began to throb 'neath the stroking that it was pumping into the eyes what must drop soon, and not this time only enough to spot the blue in one small place, but enough to wet it all over. So he put her down and turned to his own room close by. And there the floodgates were lifted ; the heart had no need to pump, for the waters fell freely.

"She takes me into sich clean, clear water, and sich a smell o' green grass an' flowers 'long shore, as I never knowed afore," said he to himself, when, within the next hour he was pulling on the muddy stream looking ever for the floating something, whether it was lifeless or what had never had life, whether it was man or mantle, woman or wood.

Miss Thump and Samuel, according to agreement, met Miss Hamper and Meg at the corner of the Wilton and Cross-Cut Lane, as that point was in the way of both and therefore caused neither party an unnecessary walk. The

former came down the Wilton just as the latter turned the corner from Cross-Cut Lane, and Samuel saw Meg for the first time.

The little bonnet had slipped back, so the face was less shielded, the cheeks were glowing with excitement, the eyes were bright and looking well about, lest the "letters, figgers and manners" should spring out from some hiding-place and carry her off bodily.

Samuel, we learn from Miss Hamper, was "well up" in these, and he was also well up in the years of a youth —he was just turning upon fourteen, and had but a short time to remain under the tuition of Miss P. Barley before he was to be guided still farther on in the labyrinths of learning by one who had sounded deeper and returned more fearlessly a man—"a male," Miss Thump said—she at that time looked forward to the ministerial profession as best suited to Samuel's talents. So, being well up in years, as we said, it was not surprising that he thought the wondering face framed in the slat bonnet the prettiest he had ever seen. And we cannot find the moment in his whole life when he ever changed his mind.

"Good day, Miss Martha," said Susan, "and here she is. Good morning, Meg. This is Samuel: he is to take care of you. And you needn't be afraid anything will happen to her, when he is with her." This last she addressed to Miss Hamper, who returned her salutation heartily, and yet involuntarily tightened her hold upon the child's hand.

"Good morning, little Meg," said Samuel, advancing and taking her other hand, "I'll look out for you."

"Did you tell them I was coming?" asked Meg artlessly, and giving her hand unhesitatingly to him.

"Tell who? the boys?" replied Samuel.

"No, no, the figures, letters, and manners. I thought if they knew they'd be expecting me, and I wouldn't have to tell them who I am to-day. If I don't like them I shan't stay where they are."

"Oh, you will," laughingly returned Samuel; "you'll find them easy to know, and I can help you, if they get hard." Here the hand lay more confidingly in his, and soon its fellow was disengaged from Mother Martha, and

the two children stepped on before, leading the way to the school of Miss P. Barley, Cheatem Street.

That lady on the lookout for the new pupil, for Miss Thump had called and engaged for her, met the party smilingly, and shook them by the hand, although it seemed to her a more natural way to take everybody, friend or foe, by whatever surrounded the nape of the neck.

"And this is the dear little creature to be com—" They were in the passage-way, with the door upon the side partly open. And her head disappeared through this partial opening while her voice suddenly could be heard saying, "I heard you, I saw you—the third boy from head in the second form, I'll—" And here the head appeared again in the passage, while the arm which was nearest the door took its place, and from sundry jerkings of the shoulder to which it was attached, it is supposed that it was shaken defiantly at the third boy from the head, second form, while the hand grasped him in imagination—"mitted to my care." Here the voice was charming, and the smile merely a parting of the lips, yet as much of a smile as Polly Barley could give.

"There is her peg, Thump; I had it driven for her—a new one too, you see, Miss— what shall I call you?"

"Hamper," said Miss Thump, seeing Martha was a little bewildered, no doubt trying to reconcile the threat given to the erring third boy, second form, with the smile that followed it.

"Do not be worried, Miss Hamper, I shall take the best of care of her and—" Here the head disappeared, and this time the arm went with it. Not a word was spoken, but the shoulder jerked more than ever, and the head staid longer, maybe to see the effect.

They could not tell whether it was the same boy who was endangered or whether a new victim had unwittingly arisen. It was a subject of much speculation in Miss Hamper's mind for days after, and Meg could never settle the matter, for being a new comer it would not do to remember these invasions upon law and order, so the third boy from head, second form, and all the rest escaped for the time. These days when pupils entered—

especially when they were those who had never been at school before—were red-letter days, for Miss P. Barley never grasped firmly, shook warmly, nor swung agilely at such times, as it might frighten the timid, and discomfit those who had been initiated elsewhere.

Meg was led by Mother Martha's or uncle's hand every morning for the months that remained of Samuel's stay at Cheatem Street, to the same corner where they had first met, and there he took her hand and led her and himself where they little dreamed then. The "letters and figgers" speedily grew less formidable, the manners grew easier to make, and for two shillings a week and found, Meg was soon fairly on the way to reading, writing, and ciphering.

Peleg learned from her to read and write a few words, to keep his accounts more systematically, and Gaff also shared in the letters and "figgers," but never took much to the manners.

One day when uncle was to lead her to the corner, it was noticed that he had on a plaid neckerchief and a smarter coat than was his wont, while his shoes had new leathern ties, and had been relieved of several layers of mud; his hat had been brushed, brightened, and the interlining padded with paper, to make it a better fit; his face clean shaven, all of which had the look of one who had long pondered upon something, and having decided the best course to pursue was doing it at once, and that nothing could turn him from it. Meg noticed the smartened appearance, and so did Martha; but there were times when Peleg was not to be questioned, and his sister recognizing this to be one of them, she said nothing. When they met Samuel he still kept the little hand, and the three walked on chatting and laughing carelessly. But as they neared Cheatem Street, Meg felt his hand grow moist and tremulous, and when they reached the corner it was withdrawn for a moment and wiped upon the leg of his ample breeches. When they reached the door he said he would like to see "Miss Barley, if she war in no ways objectin' to it."

In obedience to this request that lady appeared with a pencil in one side of her tightly-twisted hair, and a pen-

holder in the other, while in her hand she held a goodly-sized ferule, that looked as if it might have been unsparingly applied with the hand that did not grasp firmly the coat collar, but upon regions in a line with the collar, and yet not covered by it. This look of wear caught the eye of Mr. Hamper, and she saw it, so she thought to allay his suspicions by saying, pointing to the pencil, the penholder, the ferule, and the ink upon her middle finger, "Making copies, sir."

Mr. Hamper had not a very definite idea of what "copies" were, but knew it would be safe to be noncommittal in a "Yes, ma'm," and so gave it.

"Walk into this room, sir," said Miss Barley leading the way to an apartment in the rear, as she inferred from his manner that his business was of a private nature.

As he slipped his hat from his head, the wad of paper from under the interlining slipped also. This he quickly slid into his pocket, while the hat he slid under his arm; and closing the door after him sat down near the instructress of "Children and Youth, Male and Female," just a little awed at his own daring and her dignified presence, and yet, with that same look of determination that Martha had read early in the morning.

He felt for the hat under his arm, then for the wad in his pocket, and assuring himself that both were safe he began, "I'm Peleg Hamper, ma'm."

"I inferred so," said Miss Barley, "from your coming with Meg. You are her uncle, I suppose. She has told me of you."

And so Meg had talked of him, and was not ashamed to call him uncle. This emboldened him still more, and he plunged in.

"Yes, she calls me uncle, but ye can see, ma'm, she's born a lady; so I thought as she seems to sail easy with the letters, and figgers, and manners, that a 'eavier cargo wouldn't 'arm 'er a bit, and she might stow away some kind o' moosic."

"Well, well," began Miss P. Barley, scratching her head with the pencil in one side of the twist.

"I know what ye're agoin' to say, ma'm," interrupted Mr. Hamper. "Ye mean ye can't give it for two shillin's

a week and found, and I don't ask it, ma'm, I don't ask it. All I asks be, that wot ye do ask—not now—but when the proper time comes, ye shall 'ave wotsomdever it might be, ma'm. Give 'er full sail, ma'm; I doesn't want it reefed a bit. Give all the riggin', and jest cali on Peleg Hamper for the cost, ma'm. That be all I've got to say, and I'm keepin' ye from yer craft, so I'll go." And he drew the wad from his pocket and adjusted it under the interlining.

"But," began Miss Barley, "you do not say upon what kind of an instrument you wish her to learn. There's the piano, the guitar, the harp, the organ, the—"

"Beg yer pardon, ma'm, I won't trouble ye to say 'em all," said Mr. Hamper, with a perplexed look upon his face, and nervously pulling at the wad of paper with such force as to endanger the interlining. "Anything, ma'm, or everything. Ye and Meg can make it as ye please, only it must be moosic that she'd be bred to, if she war where she ought to be. Ye can see it, 'er build even, if the riggin' don't suit—everybody can see 'er build," and he looked as proud as if Meg had been his own.

"I will talk with Meg as you say, sir," and here the penholder took its turn to come out of the twist and scratched the head; "she is an uncommon child."

"That be jist what they all say," and he arose repeating the assurance that she had only to send her bill and it would be immediately cashed.

Besides the honor of having one in her school who was a musician, there was another inducement for Miss Barley to offer no objections to this arrangement—the cashing at once, which was not a thing she often met with; so Mr. Hamper was cordially invited to call again and inspect the school and its work.

"Thank ye, ma'm," said he, "it be a place, I'm sorry to say, I war never 'eaded for when I war young, and I be too old now. Good day, ma'm, good day."

Meg ran out to him as he went through the passage, caught his hand, and said, "Good bye, uncle."

He took her up, kissed her laughingly, and set her down with a "Good bye, Meg, child."

Instinctively the children saw there was a love be-

tween the two too sacred for derision, so they looked on wonderingly, and raised not a finger or a laugh.

So Meg learned to play upon the guitar and, of course, to sing with it, and the voice was sweet not powerful, and full of something that drew all unto it.

Samuel staid in Cheatem Street longer than he should, and at last had to go. After that he saw Meg not so often; and when she knew in after years that he was the junior member of Trout & Thump, she grew shy, and knew him no longer as she had known him in their childhood.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"GLITTER, GLISTEN, GLOW, AND BURN, OWLIE."

THE clerk in the room, which anybody might enter, was drowsy, the long law documents were fading steadily, and the words growing to the length of the documents as they, too, sunk quietly in the distance. The quill had fallen in the midst of this vision, when both it and the clerk were aroused by a quick, though not a harsh voice saying, "Blot! sir, blot! and a big one, too."

"Yes, sir," meekly came from the arousing clerk.

"Is that the way to do your work, sir? Is that the way Trout & Thump allow their business to be conducted, sir?"

The owner of the voice was somewhat bowed, but by what it was not evident, for he was not old, yet his hair was white in many places, and in the rest an indescribable color, perhaps as near a clay as anything else. It was long and hung in sort of half curls over his shoulders, but in color, in texture, in length it was not first-class hair, and it had not turned from age, for his face was not old. Labor had not bowed him, his hands showed that; trouble had not bowed him, for although he had a determined earnest look in his large gray eyes, he was not a man bowed by grief. It might be from the habit he had

of leaning upon the large golden head of an owl which looked out of a pair of small diamond eyes as it sat upon a thick ebony cane.

"No, sir; no, sir; I assure you not, sir," replied the now fairly awakened clerk. "We are not busy, and I was up last night." Here the mouth quivered a little, and the owl must have seen it, for the cane was raised at the words "I was up," and intended coming down hard upon the floor in disapprobation of the being "up," but it stopped short and struck softly on the boards, for the quiver had struck softly on the heart of the owner of the mongrel hair.

"With whom?" He tried to say it harshly, but he was too much touched for that.

"With—with my mother."

"Are you sure?" and the owl's eyes glittered and gleamed searchingly.

"I wish I was not," returned the quivering mouth

"Why?"

"Because I am not sure of having her long, sir."

"Why?"

"She's sick, sir; very sick."

"Where?"

"In Blue Bottle Court, last house at the end, sir, up two flights."

"All right, sir," and the owl was leaned heavily upon. "Mr. Thump engaged?" asked the visitor, nodding his head in the direction of that gentleman's private room.

"No, sir," said the clerk, wondering and quivering, the former that it could be all right to have a loved mother where his was, and the latter that anyone could be so heartless as to think it so. "Shall I tell him a client, sir?"

"No, no; just open the door and I'll stump in, Owlie and I.—If it were not for her," and he nodded to the bird, "I should not walk much, young man. I'll call up two flights, last house from the end, sir, Blue Bottle Court, call and see for myself. Sh'an't tell you when, sir, and then I'll catch you all if you are to be caught. We know how to do it, Owlie, we know," and the earnest gray eyes read the sad young face before them.

"A gentleman, Mr. Thump; shall he walk in?" and the clerk felt the door pushed still wider open while the gentleman answered for Mr. Thump.

"Shall he walk in? Of course he shall. Mr. Thump, I am glad to see you, sir; glad to take the hand of an honest lawyer. How do I know it? you will say. Never mind, sir, never mind; I know it, that's enough. Do I interrupt you? If I do let me wait till the point is clear. I never like to come upon a man who has a point half settled, for the chances are, if he is interrupted, that point is a dead loss to him. You will ask me my name in a moment; I'll save all the time I can and tell you. Call me Hansom, sir, John Hansom. That was quite appropriate when I was younger, sir, and I don't flatter myself to say it; but now I am old, and have to lean upon Owlie most of the time when I'm on my legs. She's sharp, that owl, sir; you wouldn't think it, but she is. I'll sit down here, sir; this seat looks easy. I'll sit down and get breath while you finish that point you were at when I came in; and then I'll give you a point, yes, several points, sir, and you shall make the most of them."

Having thus delivered himself, Mr. Hansom sat down, by holding the side of the chair with one hand and Owlie with the other, took off his hat and felt his hair as if it were a matter of some solicitude to him that the curls were all right and properly hung, then stroked his beard which matched his hair as nearly as it could, but was not so long and flowing, put Owlie and the cane on which she stood directly in front, between his knees, and leaned upon her.

Mr. Thump was, of course, much surprised at the entrance of his visitor, and still more so at the "points" he had given him in his few moment's speech. There was no opportunity for reply, so he stood up and respectfully listened, and when the pause came he said, "I assure you with truth, Mr. Hansom, that I had nothing of importance under consideration, and am at liberty, when you shall deem it proper, to attend to anything you wish to put under advisement. My partner, Mr. Trout, is not in at present; he is an older and abler—"

Stump, stump, stump came down the ebony cane, and with such force that Mr. Thump stopped short.

"I know he is not in, that is why I came. I shall never come when he is in. He is older, I know, and that is just why I do not wish to see him. I am old enough myself. I do not want age, sir, I want honesty. I want scruples, sir, scruples of conscience, not age. He is abler, yes, I am glad he is; if he was not, sir, I should never seek you. He is abler, yes, abler in wickedness, deep, underhanded wickedness, with a bland surface; you don't know him, sir, but I do. When I have given you my points you'll cut your wisdom teeth and not look at the world so innocently. I know all about you, sir, Mother Susan, the cottage, the funeral, and all. How I know I will tell you sometime, not now. If I have been sharp enough to find out all that, I shall expect you to be sharp enough to find out all I want to know, and more too—some things that other people want to know."

Here he paused for breath, and to pat the bird, whose eyes glittered so brightly that one might almost say they saw the points and were eager to have Mr. Thump do the same.

"But," began the attorney, "perhaps you are not aware that partners are expected to share the responsibility of cases, to consult upon the difficult, and to share the fees if any are earned. Honor compels me to make this in common with Mr. Trout, the senior member of this firm."

"That is just what I was looking for," cried Mr. Hansom gleefully and leaning more upon the bird. "Scruples, scruples! I knew they would come. But, sir, if I prove to you that your honorable senior partner has been for months actively, and for years tacitly engaged upon a case which he has kept from you, then what would you say of honor? If I prove to you that a wrong done years and years ago must be righted; if I prove to you that the so-called illegitimate must become the legitimate; that the shame cast upon purity and innocence must be swept away forever, and give its victims rest in their graves; if I prove to you that your partner knows of all this, and is plotting, planning, and will soon

be executing—for what? To enrich himself, sir, and let the lawful heir live under the shadow of doubt and under the weight of wrong! If I prove this, sir, where are your scruples?"

Instantly the visits of Marplot and Wallace came to the mind of the young attorney. At the time they excited his suspicion, as we have already recorded, but Mr. Trout's plausible excuse for their long, close conversation —that of old friendship purely, and not legal consultation, had disarmed him upon that score, but he had long found his partner preoccupied, and hence neglectful of minor matters, which rendered him quite unreliable as an aid to him in cases where he needed, or thought he did, the counsel that experience could give. So, Mr. Hansom's offer to prove certain things did not find barren soil.

"If I am needed for righting wrong, for making just the unjust, and it be necessary to withhold the proceedings from my partner, I shall have no scruples, Mr. Hansom, about undertaking the case," replied Mr. Thump with an honest zeal that betokened a heart touched for the suffering, and a hand eager to stretch forth in aid.

Stump, stump, went the ebony cane, while the diamond eyes glowed warmly this time. "I knew that would send those particular scruples to the wind. So now I shall come to the points at once, sir, and expect you to make the most of them. But you are a rising man, sir, and an honest one too, so that keeps you from springing up as it were. Honesty pays, sir, in the end, but in these days it don't pay as soon as it ought to, so I know you are not a man of means; but you will be, sir, some day, mark my words. We know, don't we Owlie?"

He laughed as he patted the golden bird with one hand, and with the other drew out a silken purse and laid it upon the table before the astonished attorney.

"It is uncertain, sir, what you will be called upon to make of the points," he said in an explanatory way, as he raised his hand to silence Mr. Thump's remonstrance against so much of a "lay down" before any service or advice had been given. "You may be called upon to travel, sir; you may be called upon to search, sir, above the earth and below; how can I tell what you will do

with the points? It takes money, sir, pounds and shillings to make points work right in this case. So you will need it all, and maybe more, and thank heaven John Hansom has got it, and plenty of it, and is not afraid to spend it, sir. Nothing must be left undone to make all these points tell in one great point—the finding of somebody, and that somebody is the one who has been wronged, wronged, bitterly wronged," and the head fell upon the hand, the curls trembled, the breast heaved, a great sob come from the heart, and all was silent a moment. When he looked up, the diamond eyes had a companion—a tear.

He hurried on to begin the statement of his case as he saw a disposition on the part of the lawyer to give sympathy for whatever might so affect him.

"We are ready now, are we not? Ah, yes, quite as it should be," he said approvingly as he saw Mr. Thump draw out pencil and paper for noting the case. "You see these points have pierced me so, day and night, for long, long years, that I know them each and all so well, I forget it is not the case with anyone else. Now, Owlie," he addressed the bird confidingly, "if I leave anything out, glitter, glisten, glow, and burn till I think of all that will make the points."

The bird of gold was passive, but evidently impressed with the part she was to do: keep a lookout in the dark, and see that all was brought to light that should be.

"I suppose, sir," said the client, "I had best go back to the point that laid the foundation for all the points that are the troublesome ones. I'll be short as I can and yet make 'em sharp, sir; sharp where they ought to be. The first one is, that many years ago a cross, crabbed, bristling old fellow who gave a clenched fist instead of an open palm, sent adrift upon the world a son who had from a dying mother received a few hundred pounds. The place from which he was sent adrift was Ivandale, sir, and the man who held the first was the last to bear the name of Radnor, and well it is, sir, if it could not be borne any more creditably than he bore it. I see you look as if you had heard this before. You would not be a sharp man, sir, if you had not, for many of your cloth have

looked for heirs and found them, too, but they turned out to be trumped up claims; and so one and another having been burned by reaching for the rusty old estate, it has been dropped. But the Crown has its eye on it, and the Crown, sir, must not have it, for it belongs to somebody. This is the main point.

"Now, then, this son with his few hundred pounds, learned to labor, sir, to labor. Where he got the good sense from to do it, I don't know, and so do not care, but he did it at Wenham, as pretty a village, sir, as you ever saw. He learned to make knives and forks—cutlery, to be technical, I suppose you would say. He dropped his name and became plain William Seebold; here again he showed his good sense. He rose in the shop, in the village, and in the world, just as he deserved, sir. He had a wife and one child, Mary." Here the grip on the golden bird, who was listening attentively, grew very tight with one hand, as the other stroked nervously the beard and tremblingly put back a curl upon the shoulders. "Just before the wife died she learned that their daughter might some day be Lady of Ivandale, and made the father promise that this fact should be left with the child, or some one who would care for her if he should be taken also. It may be well, and it may not be well that he did, sir, for it is a damp old place, and gives everybody who enters it cramps and creaks. This old fellow of the clenched fist was like a blood-hound after his children, whom he hated. One by one he hunted them here and there upon the earth, wreaked vengeance upon them if they were happy, and if they were wretched, so much the merrier felt he, and left them unmolested, knowing that misery would soon take them off. William Seebold was the last and best, and the old man—I am ashamed to say it, sir, to say that so unnatural a thing can be done—the old man lighted the match to the long row of workshops, to the elegant counting-room, to the luxurious home of his son, and then danced like a savage about the flames, sir. The son saw him, read it all at a glance, and dropped dead from the shock, and no wonder, sir, no wonder. That is the second point.

"The child was left with no home and no money, but

a statement written by the father of his birth, his life at Ivandale, and his reasons for change of name, with the expressed hope that she might never find it necessary to lay claim to a single stone of the old walls, which had been a curse to all who had been born within them so far as he could learn. The arms of friends and neighbors were outstretched to the child, but those to whom she turned belonged to Major Ray, a man of big heart and ample means. His wife was dead, and his only child was much from home, so she lay in his arms, poor child, and slid into his heart, as she did into everybody's who knew her, sir, everybody's."

Mr. Hansom was taken just then with a slight cough, and it gave Mr. Thump time to note down a few things it seemed necessary to be exact about, as the elderly gentleman had spoken so rapidly, and so engrossed his attention, he found himself a little behind with the writing of the points.

"Let me say, sir, here, in justice to Major Ray, that he did not know of William Seebold's ancestry when he took his daughter as his own. Time passed on and she grew to girlhood, to womanhood—a glorious womanhood, sir, such a womanhood as you seldom see,—but I won't talk of that now. Richard Ray—"

"Beg your pardon, Mr. Hansom, let me ask if you did not know Miss Seebold? I ask not from curiosity, sir, but from a desire for a clear understanding of all the proof I can bring to bear," said the attorney respectfully.

"You are right, sir, to make clear the points; that is why I am here to make them plain. Yes, I knew her. I was her friend." The voice trembled a little and the diamond eyes glittered almost savagely at the attorney for the pain they knew this question had given their master, they felt it in his tightened clasp, but Mr. Thump only read the sorrow of an old man for misfortune that had come upon a friend of his young days. He seemed lost for a moment, as if searching in his memory for the place he left off. Seeing this the lawyer said gently, "You were speaking of Richard Ray, Mr. Hansom."

"Ah, yes. To make it short, Richard came home often, and at last stayed till Mary Seebold became his—"

the cough again annoyed him—" his wife. That is the third point, sir."

" Before their marriage," he continued after a moment's pause, " the major visited the castle of Ivandale, and came back declaring his daughter by adoption, and soon to be by marriage, should never lay claim to it, for his own and the Glentworth estate, left by his wife, were enough for all. He always hinted at having his slumbers mysteriously disturbed, but that is not worth the telling; it's more likely to be one of his jokes, he was full of them. Well the three, the major, the son, and the daughter lived as happily as three ever did; but a blight crept in, sir, some one poisoned the young wife's mind, and as her husband had been so much from home before she knew him, the story was plausible, and it preyed upon her so, the thought that she had wronged another, that with her child Margaret she—she—fl—fled." The diamond eyes had more than one companion now, and Mr. Hansom did not attempt to conceal his grief.

After it had outwardly passed away, Mr. Thump asked almost tenderly, as if he would revive the past sparingly, " Was there anyone who had an object in this?"

" There you have come to the point of points, sir," said Mr. Hansom looking sternly up. All traces of tears were now gone; the cane came down stump, stump. " There was, sir, there was, and he knew them all well, too, the cunning devil, when he drew them in his net. The mother fled with Margaret; the father after vain searching went into service and tried to die or be killed, but he lived until four years ago, when the fever of India struck what the bullets of the enemy had time and again refused. This I can prove, sir. The papers shall be put in your hands. The major sank under it—what else could he do? and the only one, a distant relative to heir the property of Richard Ray, has been on the watch far and near—he is a client of your partner—and by shaming the heiress of Ivandale into withholding claim to the Ray estate, he will give it to himself and his attorney. Now, sir, she is alive. Find her! find her!"

" But," asked Mr. Thump after taking time to recover

from the disclosure regarding his partner, "what of this client? Who is he, what is he, and where is he to be found?"

Mr. Hansom, who was looking now at Owlie, turning her round and round, as if to say, "Do you see anything left in the dark?" seemed to regard these questions more as the suggestions of the golden bird, than as the legal queries of Mr. Thump.

"What of this client? True enough; let me see, there is a reasonable amount of him physically, but it's not well put together; he was jointed with too much oil, sir, far too much, but the supply never seems in danger of failing him, and always more plenty when he is doing his worst. You see, I account for it in this wise. He sweats mentally, morally, and spiritually under the load he carries, the wicked load, and not being able to sweat enough in those three ways, for it must be a heavy burden, sir, to haul about on one's soul night and day, he lets off some of it physically; and so he is oily most of the time, and, of course, he must wipe this oil off, or he'd get so clogged he couldn't stir a finger. So, that is the what of him, Mr. Lawyer, oil and handkerchief, and I wish there was nothing else to fight in the 'who he is' and the where he is."

"Major Ray left one brother, the only relative near, and he dying left a daughter, who has gone, sir, gone. Now, where has she gone, and why has she gone, and who induced her to go? These are points within the main point for you to work out sharp and clear. Aim them where they deserve to be aimed. Don't wrong anybody with unjust suspicions, sir. Be sure of your game, and let fly upon it without mercy, for somebody, and I have every reason to believe it is the same one I have told you of, has had no mercy on the pure and innocent. Hunt when you have found proof, sir, hunt him down, ride him to earth; if hound and horse fail get fresh ones. So long as John Hansom has a shilling, it shall be given till this wrong is righted, and the pure and good can sleep peacefully in their graves. Now, again, who is he? If the daughter of the major's brother be gone beyond finding, he heirs the Ray estate. Does not

that establish a point, sir? I think so; then clinch it, close and tight."

"It would show a motive for the putting out of the way the only one who stood between him and the estate, Mr. Hansom," replied the young lawyer calmly, as he seemed balancing the for and against of his client's reasoning. He had to acknowledge to himself that a cursory view of the matter made the fors far weightier.

"That's it; you grasp like a sharp one. I like that in you, Mr. Thump, I assure you I do. Now, what he is I have told; but I will add, to make the point no sharper than it deserves, that he is a cowardly, niggardly, oily sneak, who is always sliding off to the right—I mean the right hand, sir, understand me, for I never knew him on the right in any other way, and when he has gone that way at a shambling pace, as far as he can, then he is off to the left. You don't want to see him but once to know him again, sir. Now, where is he to be found, in Poorly's Resort, just off the—"

"Beg pardon, I know where it is," interrupted the attorney, as Mr. Hansom looked questioningly at Owlie, as if he had forgotten just what it was "off," and thought the diamond eyes might send him a ray of light on it. "It runs from the Dragon Road to Quinby."

That's it, that's it," cried the elderly gentleman gleefully, "and when I'm through with him, I'll hand him over to a veritable dragon. That's it, so I will." Stump, stump, stump went the ebony cane, and glitter, glisten, and glow looked the diamond eyes.

"Now, Mr. Hansom, let me see that I understand you aright. You wish me to find the true heir, the child of Richard and Mary Ray; you wish also, the whereabouts of the niece of Major Ray traced, even if it be to her last resting-place, as you have every reason to suspect that there alone can she be found, and having done these, either or both, to prepare what evidence I shall obtain for the punishment of the guilty party. You know how strange are the workings of law, and it looks more than likely I shall be forced to look into the workings of my partner in this unhappy affair, so you must not expect the first point—the finding of the heir to

be the first cleared legally. I may find it necessary to accuse and convict before she can be found. I say this, Mr. Hansom, that you may not think the last to be gained is the least worked for, if things should take that turn."

"And that is just the turn I desire," replied the other, "if she be only found in time. She will soon be of age to heir it, and the Crown must not swallow it."

"One thing you have not stated—a proof of the death of the lord of Ivandale," said Mr. Thump, looking carefully over the notes he had taken.

"Ha! that is one thing you kept in the dark, Owlie, didn't you, bird so sharp? but maybe I did'nt give you time to shoot it out of your eyes so bright." Then turning to his attorney said, "That's a point you must establish clearly. I grant I cannot do it. So, you see, I told you truly when I said you might find travel necessary—to Wenham, to Ivandale; how do I know where the points will send you, sir?"

"Then I will lay out my course in this matter as soon as practicable. Meantime I may need to communicate with you, so I shall need to know where you may be found by pen, or in person," and Mr. Thump drew forth a private note-book, wrote John Hansom, and paused for the where.

"If you should desire a word with me, sir, the blind man at the corner of Lunley Lane and the Wilton will bring me speedy news of it."

"But he is not always there, and I might need you without delay."

"Then send to Blue Bottle Court, No. 4, care of Isaac Harold. Now I am through with the points, sir, Owlie and I, sir, we may as well take ourselves off."

He began to adjust the curls, straighten the beard, drew out a fine yellow silken handkerchief and rubbed the bird, the band of chaste gold that held her to the ebony, and was just drawing his coat sleeve across the band of his soft hat to brush away the bits of dust that might have lodged upon it, when a thought, or a point, or a suggestion, or a direction, or something occurred to him, and he sat down again. It was some mo-

ments before it became apparent which of these was to be ventilated. The cane stumped, the eyes glistened, the hand that guarded both trembled a little, and at last came, "Did you get any clue to the who or what of the poor girl you and your good Mother Susan buried, sir?"

The lawyer started, and after a few moments' reflection said, "No, Mr. Hansom, I am sorry to say we did not, but I hope and pray the heir to so much abundance as this unknown and unfound client should possess, has not met such a fate. That never occurred to you, did it? And let me see"—here he turned to his notes—"that could hardly be, for her name was probably Maria, and the one we seek is Margaret. The one found had about her every evidence of wealth, and our client, if she has been left to the world, as we fear she has, would not be likely to have such about her. I hardly think that can be, and yet if you ask me the proof upon which I give my opinion, I cannot tell you."

"Quite right, sir, quite right. I find some things have a firm footing outside and some inside. The inside ones are the safest to go by, but the world don't take it so, sir. Proof it wants, tangible, plausible, laudable proof, but it cannot always be got at. Now, I have met men, and I knew, sir, I knew they were not right in here," laying his hand upon the great silk button that came probably just above the apex of the heart—at all events it was so near that it proved a good guide for the lawyer, whose eyes were following Mr. Hansom's hand. "How do I know it? By proof? No. By what, sir? by what?"

"Convictions internal. You are, no doubt, blest with the power of discerning the real from the spurious," Mr. Thump returned, quite interested in the turn things had taken.

"Power? power? No, no, sir, it is not a power. A power is what one can wield, make use of, shut down upon with a valve, call into work if it is needed. That is what I call a power. But this that I have rules me, I don't rule it," and Mr. Hansom stumped the ebony cane as if it were a sore thing to be held by a power if it did benefit him.

As he finished the last stump, the attorney suggested, "It may be instinct; that may be a name that would please better. An instinctive dread at the approach of evil may be so deeply implanted in your nature that it gives you warning."

"Instinct. No, it is not instinct, sir; it is instinct in a dog—I am not a dog. No, you can't tell me what it is."

"But it may be the same, only more highly developed in you, just in proportion as your other faculties are higher and more numerous than those of a dog. His are of the mortal, yours of the spiritual."

"I can't make it out; I never could," replied the elderly gentleman, shaking his head, "it comes and it goes; it is a part of me, and it isn't a part of me, sir. It says, 'John Hansom, that person is good, but weak; that one is bad, but bold; that one is so and so, and this one is so and so,' sometimes even to the name. Sometimes all it says is 'Motive good' or 'motive bad.' Instinct never does that. Conviction never does that. The more we talk about it, the farther we will get from it, sir; so I will say, that the more I listen to it, the more I think a starting for Wenham at once is what it now says. But first, sir, let me know how you found out the name of the dead girl."

"She wore a ring inscribed, 'Henry to Maria.'"

At this the cane gave a short quick stump, the diamond eyes gleamed, glittered, glistened, and burned, as if touched with a new flame, and Mr. Hansom replied with quickened breath, "Are you sure, sir; quite sure? Where is it? who has it? It must have been taken from her by the folks at the morgue, for after she was on the slab she hadn't it, she hadn't—I was passing by when she lay there," he quickly added as he saw Mr. Thump's look of inquiry and wonder, "and I went in, I went in, sir; I always go in when the convictions, as you call them, tell me to. I saw no ring."

"It was taken from her hand by the man who found her, Peleg Hamper, as honest a man as ever sat at the prow or stepped upon the land," the lawyer returned with a glow upon his cheeks and an earnestness in his

voice that did not escape the keen gaze of Mr. Hansom; "but, unfortunately the only door that opened to show him the way to make a living was the unpleasant one of looking for what floats in the Thames."

"And I am not sure that it is unfortunate for him, are you, Owlie?" He turned the cane so that he could look into the bird's eyes; he nodded to her, and she sent back a gleam. "I do not call it unfortunate, sir, for anybody to find a way to make a living honestly; I do not, indeed. But the ring, sir, has he got it?"

"No, he kept it till the time of her burial, and then slipped it upon her finger, first showing it to all who were in the room. He seemed to think that the testimony might be needed that there was such a ring."

"It should have been retained, sir; sentiment should have been put aside and the ring retained. If Owlie and I had always let sentiment run away with us, where now would we be. I say again, it should have been retained, Mr. Thump,"

"So I thought, Mr. Hansom," quietly returned the attorney. "But now I must look to my journey. I cannot tell when the coaches start, if I am to go by coach, until I refer to the best route."

"The coach, the easiest, safest, speediest, and altogether the most accommodating, starts from Cross Bow at eleven o'clock, sir, and, let me see, you will reach Wenham the day after to-morrow by nightfall. If you will be ready for so speedy a start, I will engage a seat inside, for my road takes me near there, and I know the innkeeper; a clever man he is, too. Take warm wrappings, Mr. Thump, the air is chill, and the open country you will find even cold. So if you say eleven to-night, sir, I will engage; if not till to-morrow, I will do the same."

"Thank you, Mr. Hansom, if not the least trouble to you, it would save me much time, for I must arrange some business affairs with my partner, and the clerk I can hardly spare, as he, too, will be busy." Even then the lawyer began to look upon the table for what must receive immediate attention.

Again Mr. Hansom arose, but this time took things

not so deliberately; the bird was not re-brushed nor the hat re-rubbed. He shook hands with Mr. Thump, and that gentleman was about opening for him the door into the outer room, when, catching sight of the clerk, who was again drowsing, he said, "Needy, sir, deserving? worthy?" at the same time nodding stiffly, lest the curls might be disarranged, in the direction of the high desk over which the clerk was nodding, and the high stool upon which he sat.

"Yes, sir, I think so; Mother Susan found him living in poverty, and, as we could make use of him, we took him. He is honest, apt, gentle, and—"

"And drowsy, sir, very drowsy," interrupted Mr. Hansom shaking merrily.

"That is hardly to be wondered at," replied the other. "His mother is hopelessly ill, and he cares for her at night."

"Ah, poor woman, she better go, she better. A sight of trouble, Mr. Thump, a sight in this world. Coach goes at eleven, sir. Best seat inside. Good day, good day. Let me grasp the hand of an honest lawyer," and he shook warmly the hand that came forth to meet his, passed out the door so softly that the quill in the fingers of the worn-out clerk still lay tipped up from the paper, the head still rested on the hands, and the eyelids still held themselves together as if sealed.

CHAPTER XXV.

DOES SAMUEL SEE IN IT A CHANCE?

MARTHA HAMPER had been called upon to attend a poor woman whom she knew long before in Poorly's Resort, and who was in immediate danger of adding one to the half-fed mouths and to the scantily-clothed limbs that opened wishfully and kicked feebly when the hard fate that sent them to choose Poorly's as their resort upon

earth dawned upon them, and this dawning was never long behind their actual appearance. They always began the battle early, even after a few breaths, and they never ceased till the last resort opened to them, sometimes before they could buy, beg, or steal for themselves the needed bread—but oftener, sad to record, oftener after they had long ceased to think there lay any difference between the buying and the stealing.

Martha had been summoned away, Peleg and Gaff had gone up stream, and Meg left to the books she usually enjoyed, the guitar she always found soul in, the pencil that was just completing the outline and beginning the shading of Snatcher at high tide, the knitting that wove into its meshes so many dreams of what might be, found solace in none of them. Each in turn was tried, but each in turn was thrown aside. An unrest possessed her, and fearing it might be the coming of the washing, washing, she suddenly decided to seek the cheery presence of Miss Thump.

"He will be in his office until time for tea, and I can chat with Mother Susan awhile and be home long before that," she said to herself, as she discarded the blue knot from her throat, superseded it by a lavender and then by a crimson, and that by—well, by not very gently closing the box into which she had tossed them one after another, and going back to the touching up of Snatcher's prow with a little more light here and a little more shade there, and after all but a little it got of either—for soon again the small glass reflected her face, not so ill-pleased this time at the effect of a cherry knot upon the meeting of the whitest and glossiest collar. "Strange," she said to the ribbon, which she smoothed, patted, pulled, and looped—"strange that I did not think of you before; cherry is what I should always wear. And here is the mate to it, only narrower, for just that little nook," and down slipped that made of "the narrower" into the most bewitching place such a knot can rest. A certain depression that is always found by the side of a gracefully laid twist of brown hair, that is wavy but not curly, that is loose but not falling, makes the knot or the flower or whatever is put in it, just enough in front to show, just enough

on the top to look well, and just enough on the back to relieve monotony. The dress was a pretty plaid, black and white with a little stripe of blue, so the cherry set it off, and the stripe set the cherry off; and after rolling the knitting work in a clean napkin, and depositing that with a delicately scented handkerchief in a cherry bag with cherry drawstrings, which she put on her arm, and with a light hood over her head, she set herself off for Lunley Lane.

Miss Thump was rocking in the front room with its cheerful lookout on the porch and beyond the porch, the yard with its heavy-headed flower-stalks—the blooms had been busy some time in attending strictly to resolving themselves into what would be seed for the next year's sewing—with its cozy look in and its warm welcome that awaited everyone.

As we said, Miss Thump was rocking. She had been sewing, but the slip she was making for some little creature who had unwisely slipped into the world without bringing its furnishings with it, had fallen from her hand. She did not know that she had stopped work ; she did not know that she was rocking, for that was an indication of laziness on the part of a sewer ; one could knit and rock, but not sew and rock. She did not know that now and then she nodded her head approvingly, that at one time she seemed to be holding out her hands as if in blessing. She only knew that she was thinking, and thinking of what might be the next thing to be pasted in her Bible, to be printed in the Daily Bee.

The clicking of the gate aroused her, she looked up and out, for she sat in front of the window, the color overspread her face, and a happy look followed the color, as the thought came—" A good omen."

Meg came quickly up the walk, for it was she who had clicked the gate as Miss Thump hurried to the door, threw it wide open and her arms too: the girl came through the one and into the others.

" Why, Meg, I was just thinking how lonely you would be to-day, and was saying to myself, ' Why don't the child come and sit with me ?' You see Miss Martha stopped on her way to Poorly's and asked if she needed

me could I come? So that is how I knew you were alone; she promised to call on her way back. Come in, come in," and Meg entered gladly the room which seemed to her the most charming spot on earth.

A chair smaller somewhat than the one Susan always sat in, was drawn near. Meg sat down, threw back her hood, felt for the knot made of "the narrower," and finding it exactly as it had been put, next sought for the one at the meeting of the collar, that had sunken a trifle where it should have been full, but a gentle reminder of that delinquency in the shape of a slight pulling up, set all to rights, and soon after, when Miss Thump picked up the slip, and began search for the needle she had been sewing it with, she drew the cherry strings out, opened the cherry bag and took out her knitting. A pretty picture they made, the elder with her pleasant cheery look—the little acid that Susan sometimes found essential to bestow upon others was never visible when Meg was near—the younger with a quiet peace and joy about her that seemed to say, "I could sit here rocking and knitting forever."

"How are all the poor souls we know, Meg?" asked Miss Thump in a pitying tone, as soon as she had found the needle upon the carpet, so near the side of her foot that she thought it a wonder it had not found its way through the cloth slipper she wore, and into the soft cushion of fat that was daily growing softer and more tender, for she began to feel more like the quiet of home, and less like the hurry and bustle of the street; so the foot not knowing what else to do with itself—it had always been so stirring—was growing full and fat.

"They are all doing better," returned Meg in a more encouraging way, "all but the woman at the other end of the court. I am sorry for her, Miss Thump, but I do not like her."

"Meg, Meg," broke in Susan, "are you going to give up the old 'Mother Susan' you have called me so many years? Going to give it up because you are a young lady? If it was Mother Susan when you were a child, why can't it be so always? Why not, Meg?" and she looked searchingly down upon the face that bent blush-

ingly over the stitch she was picking up and passing over for the next scallop.

"It can, that is, it might be—but—well, I did not know but you—you might think me too familiar," stammered out Meg, and the stitch slipped, and down, down it went, letting go its hold of row upon row, till it had made a ruin of itself and the pretty figure it had held in place, or had helped with its fellows to hold.

"Since when might I think so, *Miss* Meg, *Miss* Hamper?" began Susan a little bit tartly; but seeing the tears start in the girl's eyes, she softly added, and tried to laugh as she added it, "You hear how it sounds to be *Missed* don't you, Meg? I thought I would let you see how it would make you feel. How would it look if Samuel when he grew up had suddenly found it was too familiar to say Mother Susan?"

"But he is your son," asserted Meg.

"No more than you are my daughter," Miss Thump returned.

"I wish I—" She was going to say, "I wish I was your daughter," but as it seemed unmaidenly, she turned it well into—"knew whose daughter I was or am. No, I think it should be was, for I feel sure no one is alive who belongs to me. The river seems to tell me that; it always did."

"Still worrying, child, as to who you are. Now I would not think of it. Why Samuel don't know who he is—you know all about my getting Samuel," and she pointed and nodded towards the large Bible. She never called it a family Bible till after Samuel Meshach Thump was written in it. And why should she? "I do not think he ever wonders or cares."

"But he is a man and—and his friends won't ask him who he is, who he was, I mean, they look at who he is," came from Meg, who was bending low over the lost stitch which seemed in a fair way of being still farther lost, for her fingers trembled too much for its successful catching.

"And now what new notion has the child got in her head," said Susan, just stopping in time to check the "humph" that wanted to come.

"Nothing new, Moth—Mother Susan, it is not new. I always felt it, and a little more now, perhaps, than ever."

Meg laid down the knitting; the lost stitch sped on and on, no doubt till it reached the end of its journey and the beginning of the pattern; a great sob broke forth, and she laid her head on Miss Thump's lap. The tears fell upon the hem of the slip, the purest, sincerest that it would ever absorb.

After the outburst of grief had passed, Miss Thump, still stroking the graceful twist and smoothing the side-lock, consoled her with, "Meg I know just what makes you gloomy, you who have always been so light of heart, free of foot, handy at turns, and singing like a bird from morning till night—"

"And from night till morning listening to the washing, washing of the river against the piles, against the boats, against anything that might be on it," and she shuddered, hid her face in her hands, and her hands deep in the skirt of Susan's bombazine dress.

"Not always, child, only by spells—"

"Only by spells, Mother Susan, but the spells get worse and worse, the river grows rougher, the tide higher, the washing longer now, just as it was the night uncle and Gaff drew *her* down the stream. Sometimes I think it is because I am near eighteen and what ought to come to me is struggling to make its way up through the water. Am I foolish to hope, Mother Susan? I never did before, but the hopes come so fast that when I don't hear the washing, washing, I am so happy."

"Now, keep on hoping, Meg, it will do you good. Why I was hoping for something this very afternoon, just as you clicked the gate." As Susan said this, a warm glow overspread her face, which had Meg seen, it would have puzzled her, that at the age to which Miss Thump had arrived there should come stealing into her heart hopes that would make her blush to speak of them. However, Meg's head was still down, not hidden, but upon its side. "Now," she continued, "if I hope, and don't think it is foolish, why shouldn't a young innocent thing like you? But, I didn't finish what I was saying awhile ago. You get gloomy because you don't see young

folks enough. Now, I will tell Miss Martha and Mr. Hamper, and they shall let you come to me for a bit. Samuel shall ask the young folks he knows here for the evenings, and we will make you forget the 'washing,' as you call it. I think Miss Martha will be here soon, and I will tell her what I shall do. She will be glad for your sake, but sorry for her own, for she knows you don't see folks enough."

"But I do," said Meg, drying her tears, "I do; I go out every day to see folks."

"And what kind of folks do you see, pray? Folks that are full of trouble and sorrow; folks that cry but never laugh; folks that are always striving and struggling. Why, they don't do a girl like you any good, Meg. It's well enough you should know there are such poor creatures, and do for 'em now and then, but not to bide among 'em as you do; that must be stopped. It is Susan Thump's duty to look after you a little now, and Susan Thump never neglects her duty. Miss Martha, you see, Meg, never had children," here the little woman drew herself up with motherly pride, "and she don't know they must be young before they are old. The dough must have its freaks at rising in bubbles and rising without bubbles before it is ready to make a quiet, contented loaf. Now, child, I will settle everything after a bit, and so dry your tears and tell me of the woman at the other end of the court I asked you about, for I think she said she wanted to move, but I don't see how she can ever make but one move more, and that her last one. I have got a room, or can get one for her."

"I can't tell you just how she is," Meg replied, brushing away all tear-traces, "and before I say anything that I do know about her, let me thank you, dear Mother Susan, for wanting me to visit you—but uncle could never get along without me and Mother Martha—"

"Sh! sh! I will see to it all. All will be right on that score. Now, what about her?"

"I don't think she is any weaker, that is, all the time," the young girl said sitting up and looking brighter and beginning to take a fresh interest in finding the slipped-down stitch. "She has something on her mind,

but I don't ask her about it, for I do not like her, and yet I would not see her suffer. I would not let my worst enemy do that. And there is a young man who comes to see her who might do something for her, I think. Mother Martha found him there with her once, a long time ago, when she sewed a little for some shop, and could pay her way; and we have never seen him since till yesterday, when we took her dinner to her. He sat beside the bed, and she looked so sunken about the eyes that I drew back and looked at the coals to see if they burned, but I could still see her. He is a bad man, I know. He is dirty and red, and talks queerly and swaggers. I wish she were out of the court."

"Don't she say who the man is?"

"No, and she never looks at me—at my face, I mean. She says she don't like to see young girls."

"And it is just as well you shouldn't see her," returned Miss Thump as a shadow fell over her face. "There, it is as I said, you must not be among them so much. If Miss Martha needs anyone let her send for me."

"And me, too, said a strong hearty voice in the doorway leading to the passage, "I will go, if need be, to keep Miss Meg away. You are right, Mother Susan, right."

"Miss Thump started and cried, "Why, Samuel!" Meg started, blushed, dropped another stitch, just, too, as she was in a fair way of recovering the one lost before, arose, freeing her right hand by gathering into the left the balls, the needles, the clean napkin and the cherry bag, for Mr. Thump, after announcing himself, advanced at once towards her with hand extended, so that it became apparent that he meant to give her a cordial greeting. Therefore she arose and gave him a warm, dainty little hand that shook a little bit, but the grasp it got for the giving was so strong and helpful, at the same time mingled with tenderness and respect, that she forgot the awe she had of late entertained since she had heard of his eloquent pleadings, fine address, and fair promises for the future. She forgot that he was a lawyer. She only thought of him as Samuel, the companion of the days

when she began to see the world through the eyes of Miss P. Barley.

"Miss Meg," said he in the same hearty whole-souled manner, "I am glad to find you with Mother Susan. I often hear of your comings, but your goings are too early for me, and I hardly think that fair. You might stay once in awhile for the sake of other days, but now I have found you and good Mother Susan chatting so cozily, I must be permitted to join, for awhile at least."

"And that, Samuel, we shall be glad to have you do," Miss Thump replied at once, seeing Meg was somewhat confused despite the lack of awe. "But tell us how this happens; you don't look sick, and you don't look troubled."

"And little Mother Susan, will you look troubled if I tell you that I am going away?" laughed Mr. Thump.

"Going away! going away, Samuel!" exclained Miss Thump, and the needle that was about to set another stitch in the hem, caught by point or by eye, anyway and anywhere it could, for it fell from her hand, and the slip went, too, so far down the bombazine lap that it was in imminent danger of tumbling to the floor.

"Yes, going away," Samuel laughed as he saw the look on the little lady's face; "and it is such an unusual thing that you may well be surprised at it."

"And where to, Samuel?" she recovered speedily enough to ask.

"To a little village not very far distant."

"Business connected with your profession?" she asked with an air that said, "My son is a lawyer."

"Yes, mother, and if I am successful, we shall see even more prosperous days than we do now," and he shot a swift glance toward Meg, as if he thought, "I can then easily take care of another, and I hope I may be allowed to."

"Something new, ain't it?" Mother Susan liked to know as much as it was proper she should concerning his clients, and much as he loved to please her in all things, he was discreet enough to withhold whatever was confidential.

"Yes, quite new and unexpected. The client called

upon me this very afternoon. As soon as Mr. Trout came to the office, I told him of my intention to recreate a little, put documents in order, gave instructions to the clerk, who proves what we thought he would."

"I found him," interrupted Miss Thump, turning to Meg with pardonable pride in her manner. "I heard a poor woman in Blue Bottle Court was dying with trouble of the lungs, was good and needy, and I went. She had a son who was willing to do, but could get nothing to do. He could write well, figure well, and do some other things that Samuel wanted a clerk to do; so he took him, and I'm glad to hear that he turned out well. But go on, Samuel dear."

"I have little more to say, mother, save that I next came here and found you and Meg so engrossed in each other that you did not know when I came upon you."

"And that is what I should really like to know," Meg said laughing, and looking up from the pattern which she was knitting wrong, and knew she was, but did not care so long as enough stitches remained upon the needles to keep her fingers employed and her head lowered a little.

"And that is what I must be pardoned for, if I keep it to myself," returned Mr. Thump in a manner somewhat teazing, and at the same time so charming that no one could take offence or even be annoyed. "There is where I have you both. I may have been here a long time, and I may have been here a short time."

"Now, we don't care a fig, Samuel, how it was, do we, Meg?" Miss Thump said this to relieve the embarrassment the young girl felt at the banter. "You may be sure, though, he is not mean enough to listen long. Now don't mind his teazing, I don't. Tell us," she turned to her son intending to start upon another subject that might lead to more of the client or the client's affairs, "Tell us when you must go."

"The coach leaves the Cross Bow at eleven precisely."

"And your seat? It must not be an outside one, Samuel."

"My client secured it inside."

"Ah, that will reconcile me. And now I must look to

your clothes, and lay them out ready to your hand when you want to put them into the portmanteau. Let me see, it is now near five o'clock." And Susan, just before saying this last, drew from her side pocket in the bombazine skirt a watch held to the waist-belt by a jet chain and pretty gold and jet pin—all of course the gifts of "My son." "And I shall have time before that to run around to Poorly's and see how Miss Martha is doing with the case she has; see if she can't drop around here to supper. If not I shall tell her Meg is going to stay—we will see her safe home, won't we Samuel?" and a little twitching at the corners of the mouth showed she thought she was doing something very sly.

"Certainly, certainly," came at once from Mr. Thump, delighted with Mother Susan's plans, "but I can suggest an amendment—that Miss Meg stay with you while I am gone."

"Just the thing," and off bustled the little woman for bonnet and shawl, soon reappeared continuing, "just the thing." It may be she had said it all the time she was absent; if so, it meant just the thing for the consummation of the hopes that she was indulging in when Meg clicked the gate.

The girl, ever thoughtful for the comfort of Mr. Hamper, found chance to remonstrate against the decision, and yet heartily thanked her host and hostess for their kindness. "But who would get supper for uncle?"

Miss Thump understood well, the warm attachment between the two, and knew that Peleg Hamper had little to lighten and brighten his old age except the company and care of Meg, whose every feeling he seemed so clearly to comprehend; and she did not wish to appear selfish or take from the welcome he would look for when he stepped ashore. But then the hopes, the hopes—it was such a good chance for them! Her ready wit suggested this.

"Wait, child, till I see Miss Martha; it may be Mr. Hamper's gone on a long cruise; I'll see, and be back shortly," and off she hurried before Meg could say yea or nay.

The street door closed softly, the feet pattered cheerily down the walk to the gate which clicked mischievously

as it heard its owner say to herself, "Humph! I can't give Samuel a better chance, and if he don't see it I'll never help him again, never, never."

A little lump she swallowed just then at the thought that Samuel might not care for the chance, might not feel her hopes, and so see in it no chance at all. She walked on to Poorly's Resort, knocked at the door of a small room after climbing two narrow half-broken flights. Miss Hamper knew her knock and came to the door, which turned on its one hinge as if it had a crick or a catch or a something in its back. This was remedied when one understood the cause of its infirmity, by holding it up a little, and bearing back on the one hinge which, should that give way too, would render the door of little account as a door. It would make, when the season was farther advanced, and the weather colder and Boreas more playful, when put against the casement, on a slant, a good wind-sifter; and no doubt it came to that soon, for even when Miss Thump tried to swing it the sole hinge weakened. Anything, anyway to make the feeble more feeble still, the struggle the greater, and yet leave life and strength enough for the combat.

The mother held to her breast which was thin, and not until Miss Hamper's arrival, well covered, a babe, her first, and she prayed her last, unless fortune should smile again upon her. The love, the tenderness with which she looked at it, with which she touched it, were just as deep as if she had lain upon a bed of down, under a silken cover.

"I never thought," she murmured as the tears came despite Miss Hamper's injunction not to get excited, "it would be like this. Charley never thought it, or we never would have left the country for this great city. He thought he could get work and do better for me and for this little thing," and she smoothed the wrinkled brow, not wrinkled by life's burdens yet, but by the strife it had made to put itself where it might meet them, straightened out the tiny fingers, drew it closer, and her lips moved, in wish, desire, prayer—prayer that was answered. And in after years the boy, for the new comer was a son, never knew that he first saw the light of day amid the

wretchedness of Poorly's; he never begged, nor stole his bread, but bought it with the earnings of toil of no mean description, of responsibility and trust of no light weight.

Miss Thump had a whispered consultation with Miss Hamper, and then drew near. The mother looked up, smiled, and put out her slender hand, saying, "I have heard of you."

The pressure was returned with warmth, and a trembling voice said, "A boy?"

"Yes—Charley," replied the young mother, with a proud light in her eye, though the slip was coarse-threaded, the flannel scarce worthy of the name, so little wool was there in it.

"Do not worry," was all Miss Thump could say, for she thought, "if Samuel had ever lain like that."

"No, no," came in the voice of Martha, "she shall not suffer. She has fallen into good hands, I tell her."

"Thank God!" the mother whispered. "I sometimes thought there was none to thank. And Charley, his father, will somebody give him work? that is all he asks for. He is good, but unfortunate. He will be glad and sorry; glad if he can do for it, but sorry, oh, so sorry, if he cannot."

"Just keep still now, there's a dear," said Nurse Hamper, smoothing the pillow which she had borrowed of a friend whom she knew living not far off, for immediate use, intending to replace it with one of her own before night, for she had every reason to believe that it was the only one the lender had. "Sleep a bit, if you can, before *he* comes home. He shall have work; so bid him be cheery over the coming of his boy."

The young mother took a few spoonfuls of tea—Martha always had a package in the bag that was packed night and day—then slept from exhaustion. Meanwhile Susan Thump had been looking carefully about the room; there was scarcely anything in it to look at, but what there was, was clean, scrupulously clean.

When Martha was at liberty to confer with her, she was peering into the fire, and into the bucket that held what makes a fire. She found little of either, and so placing the forefinger of her right hand upon the little finger

of her left, said, as if she had begun a tally of the needs and necessities, "Coals."

"Yes," replied Martha, "and better ones, too; these put the fire more out than in."

Next, Miss Thump, with the forefinger of the right on the one next to the little finger of the left, nodded towards the bed, and said, "Covers."

"And a little one for the boy," added Martha.

"Certainly, a warm one, too. I have one I made for Samuel." Then, with a look into the bowl of tea, and the bowl of nothing, and the broken cup that was too leaky to hold anything if it had been lucky enough to get the offer, tallied now upon the middle finger of the left, and suggested "Gruel."

"Thickened with oatmeal," replied Martha, again in acquiescence. "Soup is too hearty yet."

"What for the baby—the boy? Milk?" and the forefinger of the right was midway between the last stopping-place and the fore of the left, but seeing Martha shake her head, it halted.

"No, it's a sight o' comfort to the poor soul to nurse him. Gruel, tea, fire, comfort, and work for the father will soon bring better milk than pounds can buy; and when she is stronger, some soup once or twice a week will help along wonderful fast."

Susan knew well this last—soup—did not belong to her tally, so she looked again, and seeing a bare window, counted off on the fore of the left, which seemed anxiously waiting to hear what its message would be, "Curtain, weak eyes."

This did not mean that the patient already had, among all her other trials, weak eyes to contend with, or that, like the curtain they were needed, but that she would get them if the window be allowed to remain unshaded. To this Martha again assented, but also suggested that it be not anything for permanency, for they would move as soon as the poor thing was able, for Poorly's was no place for her. They both recognized about the young mother a refinement, a delicacy, a breeding that could never hold up head in such a Resort.

So Miss Thump continued to tally till the left hand

had exchanged places, till the left fore began to mark off on the fingers of the right. Some things were needs, some were comforts, and some, to the father, mother, and the boy, were luxuries.

"Now, Miss Martha, just step around to the Lane and tell Meg—she came to see me this afternoon, and I made her stay till I could come here—just tell Meg to hurry the maid with the supper, and you eat, Miss Martha, while I stay here with them. Samuel is going away at eleven by the Cross Bow coach—professional business calls him." Here, with laudable pride, Miss Thump touched the brooch that laid upon her neckerchief—it held Samuel's likeness. "So, you see, I can't stay till after midnight. He is home now, and I must help him pack his portmanteau after a bit. Now, bring back with you a good supper for the father, and anything you think *she* might eat, not forgetting a lunch for yourself to-night."

"I am so glad Meg is at your house; I did not see my way clear for the night, for brother Peleg and Gaff have gone so far up stream the chances be they won't get back till break o' day," and good Martha began drawing her shawl about her preparatory to setting out.

"There, I'm glad of that, for Meg thought she must go home and get her uncle's supper. And, Miss Martha, don't you think it would be better for her gloomy spells, to get away from the water a little? I thought, if Mr. Hamper and you, too, would consent, I'd like to have her stay with me while Samuel is away."

"And it would do her good—do her good, the poor child. I will go in time in the morning to open the house and stir the fire for brother, and will tell him. It will be hard for him to say yes, but if he thinks it will do her good, he will. Now I will run on, for I know you want to get back to help Samuel off. Did you say he was at home?"

"Yes, yes, and tell Meg she might pour the tea, if she has a mind; you will be too tired to be bothered with it, Miss Martha." There was a little light in Susan's eyes as she said this, and there was also in Martha's. Could it be that she had hopes, too? It may be; she and Susan had thought alike ever since they first met.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A PEARL BUCKLE HEARTED ROSETTE DEFEATS CRAFT AND CUNNING.

MR. MARPLOT had spent much of his energy in seeking for estates unclaimed; more of it in spending the large fees he demanded upon the establishment of clear titles, and the remainder of it in mopping his brow and hands, although in his younger years there was not so much of the mopping needed, and consequently more to be devoted on the spending, after the seeking had been successful. Yet of late years he had grown miserly and hoarded some wealth.

Whenever it made no difference in receipts, if there was no other way than an honest way before him, he chose that, but it was far more in accordance with his nature to sneak and sidle into the claimant's pocket, get as much more as was due him as he could, and emerge, never the way he went in, but through some threadbare corner, with mop and glands in full operation. The glands seemed to stand for conscience with him, they always worked more when he wronged others or when he came near his victims. As he grew older, they grew stronger, for they had more to bear. Conscience is always keener as a wicked life weakens physically and grows spiritually.

For years past he had spent time, money, and energy in looking for heirs to the musty time-rent hangings, worm-eaten linen, tarnished plate, that awaited, upon the walls and board of Ivandale, a claimant.

To him it was the last struggle for plenty to look for in old age, for he knew a trap whose successful springing would bring him more than a paltry return for service rendered; it would bring him an ample fortune. When

he thought how long before he had prepared so sneakingly this trap which had not rusted, but grown brighter as the time of its springing grew nearer year by year; how he had crushed out a life that should have been brightened and made happy by love of husband and love of child, the mop was powerless to compete, and conscience sent the oil in streams, not drops. He had travelled in many countries, with means and without, and when the latter was the state, he journeyed by foot or by asking aid. He had a dogged determination, and if he had been as bent upon doing good as he was upon doing evil, many a life would have been bettered. Children and children's children had followed the mistress of Ivandale from time to time as they were ready, or rather as they were forced, whether ready or not. Of these departures he had obtained legal proof; but the descendants of one child, the younger son, who had tacitly encouraged his mother to obey her last summons, were not all dead, and to them Ivandale belonged. Of these last he knew and much that he knew kept to himself. With his lawyer, the honest, well-reputed Trout, he deposited the legal proofs, and he, acting upon them, and some proofs that were not strictly legal, sent means to Margaret Ray to come to England and establish her claim as sole heir to the yellow, tender, and musty, and what they treated of. Of the old lord's death they had not proof, yet such was more to be believed than doubted, for he could be counted more than four score and fifteen if living, which far exceeded man's allotted years, and his life had long been one of exposure and probable deprivation. The estate was in danger of seizure by the crown, but the lawyer felt himself fortified in this very lack of proof—fortified, till craft had under the showing of cunning, given him the one link needful to make his fair client mistress of Ivandale; but first Mistress ——

"Ha! ha! that's good. I will call again," said that worthy blandly to himself, as he laid the yellow, tender, and musty away, folded his notes and copy within his pocket, gave the officer of the municipality notice that his business was concluded. The papers were counted,

the officer nodded, Mr. Trout nodded, and the great iron doors swung upon the vaults subterranean.

Mrs. Mutter's bell rang. Zeke was not at home, much to the delight of the owner of the bell. If it had been an applicant without, she would have realized the lack of dignity in attending the summons in person, but as it proved to be Mr. Trout of Lunley Lane, an applicant indeed, though that lady knew it not then, shrewd as she was, for he called to apply, neither for her nor her *one* vacancy, and but *one*, but for the vacancy in Miss Ray's heart.

Mr. Trout being in love with the lodger on the second-floor back, and likewise in love with her prospects, he was thrown quite as much off his guard upon being opened upon by the lynx-eyed landlady of No. 40 Chapel Street, as she was upon doing the opening. Both being thus off, it caused an awkward pause broken by Mrs. Mutter, who thought it better not to recognize her visitor in any other than a professional manner.

"I 'ope you don't think I answer the bell often, sir, but, you see, Zeke took a turn or two around the square, and hain't come back yet. It never does, I find, to give 'em an inch, they'll take an ell; but a body that's been brought up as I'ave, sir, can't do—"

Here Mr. Trout, who began to find his guard likewise, made a bow and touched his hat with much gallantry, and Mrs. Mutter's heart began to flutter so that she found herself suddenly speechless.

"I beg pardon, ma'm," said he, slipping in as she paused, "but legal business calls me here to see an inmate of your house, Miss Ray. Is she in?"

"Oh, you are Mr. Trout? Walk in, and I will send up," she said opening wider the door, on whose threshold was placed again the shining boots, surmounted by glossy broadcloth.

Mrs. Mutter was determined not to lose her footing in the parlor, to which she showed him, so she rang for the only maidservant she kept, a frowzy-haired and frowzy-brained creature, who made more use of her hair in preparing food than of her brain, for it was not an uncommon thing to see a boarder suddenly cease chew-

ing and dive into his mouth with thumb and finger well pinched, draw them slowly away, and describe in air the arc of an imaginary circle, with his mouth for the centre and the hair as the radius. There was no mistaking its origin, for if the curl had been baked, boiled, or stewed out of it the color remained, nothing could dissolve that; it was one of those neutral tints, made by mixing the dandelion with the brick. Had it framed a fair delicate face, soft blue eyes, long lashes, and finely cut features, it would have been called, no doubt, "Titian;" but as it did not encircle, but tumbled unscrupulously over a thick freckled skin, small hard eyes, no lashes perceptible, and stubby features, it was—red. She was kind, accommodating and self-sacrificing; the last was a fault rather than a virtue, the lodgers thought, when they learned that careful probing of the pie, pudding, and meat-gravy was indispensable to the finding of these sacrifices. She was quite as fond of "the pretty lady" as Zeke, and glad of any chance to wait upon her.

She appeared in answer to Mrs. Mutter's ring, wiping her hands upon her apron, and seeing a gentleman so sleek and shiny, so bald and bland, made a short quick curtsy; and not seeing her mistress who was arranging the curtains with a little pull here and a twitch there, with her head on one side—the left—as she pulled and on the other—the right—as she twitched, said:

"Is it ye, sir, that bid me wid the bell? It's afther bein' Zeke's afthernoon out, and it's me that said I'd bide the applerkints till he come back."

At the sound of her voice, Mrs. Mutter turned sharply, and waving her hand with an air which she thought would strongly impress Mr. Trout with the belief that it was second nature to command, said, "Mary Ann, the gentleman's card to the second-floor back, at once."

Never before was Mrs. Mutter known to say a thing so much to the point, and stop after she had said it; so it was but natural that Mary Ann should linger expecting an appendix, a postscript, an addition, and it might be an apostrophe or a eulogy upon the late Mr. Mutter, for when she started, one never knew where she would bring up.

"I'm afther hearin' the rimnints," said the maid-servant, who had been many times reprimanded for leaving before her mistress had done, even when the potatoes were boiling dry and the leg of mutton sending forth warning that it was actually sticking to the pot. But the landlady was again lost in the sidewise motion of her head, and the pulling and twitching of the curtains.

"I'm waitin' mum," she added after a slight pause, to remind her mistress that much must have been forgotten, and at the same time it gave her a chance to look well over and around Mr. Trout.

"Must I repeat the order?" and another wave of the hand so overawed Mary Ann for the moment, that she wrung her hands again on the same corner of her apron, which operation had been gone through no less than six times while she stood in the doorway. She advanced to Mr. Trout, and dropping, or rather losing, one of the neutral tint upon the black broadcloth, where it showed to even more advantage than in the meat-gravy, she threw the apron corner over her hand and clutched at the card, making a curtsy at the same time.

How many offices that corner performed in one day—nay, even in one hour! It rubbed dingy spots from the glasses as they were put upon the table; it shielded her hand from too close contact with the bail of the pot of boiling soup; it opened the oven door, and it held securely the loaf of bread. If there rested some doubt in her mind as to it being fairly done, such could be put to flight very speedily by turning it bottom upwards upon the corner and applying her ear to the undercrust; if not "done," the corner of the apron whisked it back into the pan, and closed the door; if "done," the corner with the whole apron had been known to have been moistened and laid over to soften a "hard bake." It cleaned here and wiped there; and as we are stating truthful facts in this our history, or so near truthful as rumor brings them to us, we are obliged to record that it has been so near Mary Ann's nose as to justify the suspicion that she was wiping with it that stumpy organ—but just now it was to carry the card, bearing the name of the honest and well-reputed lawyer to the door of Miss Margaret Ray, second-

floor back, and here we will follow Mary Ann, the corner, and the card.

We had neglected to say that Mary Ann was by no means a youthful handmaiden. The anniversaries of her birth numbered more than forty, and we should think it even nearer the mark to say forty-five. So the weight of these years, with the corpulent state to which they had brought her, rendered the exertion of going up stairs so great that, as she grew short in breath, she grew to puff and pant in the chest and to perspire so profusely in the face and neck, that one drop thereof fell upon the card, and when Miss Ray answered her not very gentle rap, she found use again for the opposite apron corner in wiping this away.

Mary Ann curtsied, and holding out the card after the drop had been well rubbed in and over, so that the most that could be made of it had been done, said,

"A gintlemin, Miss, as says that's the name of him."

Miss Ray relieved the apron of its burden, but did not seem to relieve Mary Ann, who looked back, then sidewise, then peered through the hall in the direction of Mrs. Crowfoot's room. After this apparently satisfactory survey for any ambush which might conceal an enemy, she raised her finger ominously and whispered hoarsely, "Whist ye now, the mistress be pullin' and pinchin' the parlor winder kivers. It manes what she can't be afther keepin' a eye on, she'll be puttin' a 'air on at the crack that lays ferninst the door ladin' into the next room, mum. It's the sign, and niver fails. What she dhrops, Miss Crowfoot 'll be shure to pick up. So, dear, jist remimber what Mary Ann tells ye."

Miss Ray, surprised at the woman's forethought, for she always thought her stupid at the same time that she was kind, involuntarily put her hand in her pocket to reward her.

Mary Ann detected the movement and its motive, and added quickly, "It's fer the sake o' me heart and not o' me pocket, I done it, Miss," then turned away and had reached the other end of the landing by the time the hand was withdrawn. The owner then resolved to repay her in a less ostentatious way.

'Say, Mary Ann, that I will be down directly."

"Yis, Miss."

This request and reply reached the ears of the attorney who had awaited an audience with judges of low and judges of high degree, chiefs of justice and chiefs of what was not justice—at one time even with the Lord Chancellor himself; but never had he awaited with so much palpitation of heart, and so much weakness of the knees, which all the stroking upon their covering of glossy broadcloth that he could give them with a pair of nervous hands, did not strengthen; and worst of all Mrs. Mutter had time to note these symptoms between the pulling and twitching which grew more vigorous as the moment of Miss Ray's entrance drew nearer. For the first time, craft and cunning deserted Mr. Trout, for though he called them, they showed him no way of getting her out of the room. It is just possible that the reason they were silent was because they recognized those very qualities stronger in Mrs. Mutter, and knew the odds were against them if they struck the offensive.

She was cunning enough to hold her tongue, lest Miss Ray might know she was there and delay coming till she should be called away by some of the pressing duties of the establishment; and she was crafty enough to be pulling and twitching at the shade of green next to the window, and being thus concealed by the lace curtain, or what passed as such (it was as genuine as anything else that is found in a second-rate boarding and lodging house) she noted the young lady's entrance.

When Mary Ann stepped off the landing, the latter stepped to the glass that hung on the wall of her room. It was a glass that was not perfect, and seemed to be conscious of its failings, for it never looked bright and polished, never mind how much it was rubbed upon and reasoned with. It had seemed more unhappy than ever since the pretty face had come to its home to look in it daily and hourly almost, for it knew it made her nose look one degree to the right, and her mouth as far to the left, while the eyes looked as if a stitch had been taken in the outer corner of one and the inner corner of the other; whereas, the truth was, the nose was as perfect in

shape and position, and the mouth as cherry-like, and in as true line with the nose, and the eyes as sparkling and wide open, as nose, mouth, and eyes could be. Just at the looking into it of which we are writing, the glass seemed more dissatisfied with itself than ever, for despite its efforts to please, Miss Ray's face was reflected very much as it would have been from a tin pan.

"Ha, you cannot cheat me, though," said that lady, not at all angry with the abortive attempts of the glass, which Mrs. Mutter, by the way, always spoke of as a "mirror." "Lady of Ivandale or not, my face is fair enough to bait Trout with. It's not a disagreeable idea—so much better than I have ever known." While saying this, a fresh ribbon supplanted that worn at the throat, a knot of cherry to match in the hair, which was gathered into a graceful twist and held by a barb of silver; here and there a curl was made to stray from the twist in the most natural and bewitching manner.

Remembering the crack in the door, but not knowing of the space between the lace curtain and the green shade—and if she had it is doubtful if it would have disconcerted her, she descended the stairs and entered the room just as Mr. Trout was rubbing his knees for the hundredth time, but imparting no strength. He said to himself, under his breath, "Confound that Mutter, what is she doing behind there? If she ever has to call upon the law, I'll be the opposing counsel; I'll pay her, I'll pay her," and he gave his knees a blow this time that seemed either to knock strength into them, or weakness out of them, no matter which, it was sufficient any way to bring him on his feet when the lady entered; but though he tried, it did no more, so he was obliged to stand stock still. She advanced with sweetness and composure of manner, and extending her hand, which Mr. Trout, distrusting still the power of his knees, plunged forward, and grasped, squeezed, and as it was not withdrawn, squeezed again, and yet again, and was just going to sigh, when he suddenly recollected what was behind the lace curtain, and cut it short just in time to escape the ear of one whom he was forced to acknowledge his superior in craft and cunning.

"Beg pardon, Miss, but you see the shade wouldn't work, and I thought it might fall, and the sun would come in, and if you 'ad papers to look at, you couldn't read 'em; the sun is on this side at this 'alf of the day, you know. I told Zeke 'e must do this before 'e took the turn or two around the square, but that's always the way. I never was so bothered with anything in my life as with Zeke."

All this was said by the landlady as she was extracting herself from the lace curtain.

Miss Ray heard the well-known voice, but did not see at first its owner, so she stood nonplussed between the squeezing and the effect its effort had upon Mr. Trout—for his knees having suddenly played traitor he had so trespassed upon good breeding as to sit before she had—and the final twitch given to the green shade as Mrs. Mutter came forth.

Mr. Trout was not to be trifled with any longer, and Miss Ray must not be offended, for the second-floor back brought a good price, always in advance. Where the funds came from she felt quite sure, and why they came, was what she had determined to find out. Zeke would in all probability not be home for some time—he was never known to return with alacrity, when it was his time out—the adjoining room was not occupied; Mrs. Crowfoot of the second-floor front must be sought at once, and so she hurried out disarming any suspicions that might arise concerning her intentions by going up stairs with much bustle, taking cat-like strides from the landing to Mrs. Crowfoot's room; and beckoning and nodding to that lady in a most mysterious manner, at last succeeded in making her understand that she was to follow.

Softly, stealthily the two crept from stair to stair, along the passage, through the door which, fortunately, had been left open, and found themselves nodding to each other with satisfaction at the feat, as they selected the best places in the very crack of which Mary Ann had warned Miss Ray. It was not the most desirable crack for this purpose, for it would reveal nothing to the eye—it was too close for that—yet they were both capable of supplying from very fertile imaginations what it was pleased to withhold.

While the landlady, and the lady who lodged at the front of the first landing were thus employed, Mr. Trout had stiffened again in the knees, and having arisen took the little hand, squeezed it again, and this time made the squeeze more telling, by rolling his eyes upward, so as to well display the white portions thereof—which by the way, Miss Ray thought looked a trifle bilious—sighing very deeply and shaking his head, as if he meant this all to mean, "My feelings are beyond expression in words."

"Pray be seated, Mr. Trout," said she, who was not at all disconcerted by the squeezing, rolling, sighing, and shaking, and yet upon whom they were not lost.

"Thank you, Miss," replied the well reputed lawyer, not a little surprised at the calmness of the lady, after such a display of his inmost soul, "thank you, I will—that is, I will for a few moments," and he endeavored to appear innocent and indifferent by alternately toying with the fob and the seal in which it ended, and rubbing an imaginary bit of dust from the glossy broadcloth in the region of the knee, which he crossed over its fellow.

Miss Ray sat down likewise, but not upon what Mrs. Mutter was pleased to term a "tait-tait," one end of which her visitor occupied. The bait was worth withdrawing now and then; the Trout would bite the more greedily, when he took a final lunge.

"I hope you are not in haste." said the cherrylike mouth, which the "mirror" would always have was one degree east of the nose; "I should much like to know more of the claims I am here to present, and to tell the truth exactly upon what they are based. If the end is uncertain, you know, I shall be—" and the curls that had been taught to escape at just the right time here began to free themselves from the silver barb, the hands folded themselves nervously, and the pretty, well poised head hung just enough to be bewitching without being awkward, "I shall be—be deeply indebted to you. I have no means at my command and—"

"They are not at all necessary, I assure you, Miss Ray. I am only too happy to serve you."

Here, we suspect Mr. Trout would have added something quite tender, which would have clinched the sigh-

ing and squeezing, rolling and shaking; but when he dropped into the corner of the "tait-tait," craft said to him, "You are a soft-headed old fool. Play a better game, or I'll leave. You showed the white feather to the lodging mistress. Look well, now, how you bite. Be sure of the bait before you swallow."

Acting upon the whisperings of craft, he assumed the lawyerlike air, sat up, cleared his throat, and so far forgot where he was, in listening to the warnings of craft, as to adjust upon his nose a pair of spectacles, and draw from his pocket a paper.

The drawing of the paper was intended, but the adjusting of the spectacles was not; so as Miss Ray turned in the direction of the crack—she thought she detected a suppressed cough—he slipped them off in a twinkling and back whence they came.

Uncrossing his knees, he leaned forward, holding the paper still folded between thumb and forefinger of one hand, whose palm he spread upon his lap, which was very short—did anyone ever see a fob-chain unless the lap was short?—and looking fixedly away from Miss Ray said, "State, if you please, your early recollections."

"Of what?"

"Anything."

"That is too indefinite."

"Let me aid your memory." While saying the last few sentences he had purposely kept his eyes away, but in an unguarded moment he took a sly glance, and at once the crossing and recrossing of the knees began, the fob grew uneasy, the seal was raised threateningly, and the imaginary bit of dust sought for. The lawyer and the lover were so hopelessly mixed, that it is not to be wondered that craft made little headway, and that cunning stood by with idle fingers.

"My memory awaits your aid," said the cherrylike mouth. after a pause.

"You had a father," began the lawyer, dropping the chase after the imaginary bit of dust, and yet hesitating. But it was difficult to determine whether he was in doubt about the continuing of the chase, or the finishing of the sentence, for, that it needed finishing might be in-

ferred from the fact that he had made it neither a question nor a statement with a period; there was evidently a contingency to be attached to it. But as the contingency was slow in coming, the young lady thought to coax it into an appearance, by modestly saying, "I presume so." (Here Mrs. Crowfoot, on the other side of the crack, motioned with her lips to Mrs. Mutter, "I told you that it wasn't all right.") Mrs. Mutter was too intent upon catching every word to reply.

"It is not presumable, Miss Ray, it is a fact." Now his eyes were fixed on the opposite wall, and he could listen again to craft. "Yes, it is a fact, but must be substantiated, and just this substantiation is the missing link."

"And in what, pray, must the substantiation consist?"

Without replying directly, the lawyer astonished her again by saying, with assurance, "You had a mother."

"That, I well remember," said the fair client.

"Ah, exactly. You see I am aiding your memory," still the small twinkling eyes were fixed upon the wall.

"State, concisely, what you remember of her."

The heads were bent so low, and pressed so closely, that the crack was taxed to its utmost, and being thus taxed, there was nothing left for it to do but to find relief in expansion.

Noting this expansion, Miss Ray's first impulse was to plead the heaviness of the atmosphere as a cause for opening suddenly the door leading into the next room, and thus affording instant relief to the overburdened crack; but she was too discreet, upon second thought, to make open antagonists of the landlady and the lodger of the second-floor front, and trusted to Mary Ann for a successful routing of the enemy, whose lurking she felt sure of from the suppressed cough, the expanding of the crack, and the nature of the two women. So she patted her little foot upon the two-ply ingrain, which was in some places but one ply, and in others, no ply at all. But she happened to be lucky enough to strike upon two-ply, as we said, and so the sound was softer and gentler, and fell more harmoniously upon Mr. Trout's ears, and from his ears more sentimentally upon his heart.

"Let me think a moment," she said, still patting, apparently in deep thought, but really in vexed impatience that Mary Ann was not on the lookout.

But it was all right, for the rosetted slipper that encased the little foot only made the bait more attractive, and the Trout more erratic in swimming from its very allurements. The lawyer, evidently tired of staring at the opposite wall, upon which hung, just above his place of gazing, a portrait of the late Mr. Mutter in his younger days, no doubt soon after he had led Miss Sarah Sparks *to* the altar, and Mrs. Mutter *from* it, for he had a timid look; yes, a frightened look, as if a mine might be sprung upon him at any moment, and he was not sharp enough to apprehend time or place. He had on a coat of a very blue color; very tight sleeves, whose cuffs dropped over the hands; a very high, broad collar, and very bright yellow buttons; his neck was encompassed by a stock of green, from whose interior arose, like an inner wall, a dickey that touched his chin in front, his ears at the sides, and his mud-hued hair at the back. He was resting upon a scarlet covered chair, while a crimson curtain formed the background. He was netted in summer, carefully dusted in winter, and at all seasons pointed to with great pride by his surviving consort.

Not being of artistic proclivities, Mr. Trout preferred the wall as his objective point of vision; but as the foot continued patting, his eyes took a downward tendency, till they found the place where the moths had ruthlessly eaten both ply, and the harsh heel of the transient and of the permanent had ground off but one ply, and at last where the rosetted slipper patted upon two ply.

She was outwardly lost in thought of early childhood; she was inwardly scolding Mary Ann, and fancying the effect of the rosette with the tiny pearl buckle set deep in its heart.

The kind Irish heart of Mary Ann was beating with indignation; the none too vigorous brain was not idle, and the sacrifices were strewn thickly. She hurried through the tasks that must be done at once, and seizing broom and brush, pan and pail, bustled into the dark-

ened room back of the parlor, threw open the blinds, and keeping the crack and its expanders well in the rear, began such a vigorous brushing of wall and ceiling, as had not been witnessed in No. 40 Chapel Street since it had lost caste as a genteel private abode, and taken the downward to a third-rate boarding and lodging.

Mrs. Mutter could not remonstrate, for her voice would betray her; she could not motion with her index finger, for Mary Ann never looked her way, and seemed utterly oblivious to the existence of anybody in the world; so what could she do but steal out, followed by Mrs. Crowfoot?

Reaching the room of the latter, they spent some time in congratulating themselves that they did not need to cross the sea to be told by a bald-pated lawyer that they had had fathers, or to study so long over the recollections of their mothers.

The landlady was about to tell the second-floor front confidentially, of course—all landladies are strictly confidential—that she knew Mr. Trout was just going to hug the second-floor back, when she prevented so disgraceful a proceeding by blushingly stepping forward. She was about to do this when Mrs. Crowfoot, shaking her head, knowingly insinuated that Mrs. Mutter might have known better when she "took in the brazen face," which insinuation so incensed Mrs. Mutter, that the door met the casement, an instant after, with a heavy bang, and for days thereafter a gulf, that threatened defiance to bridging, yawned between the mistress of the house and the second-floor front.

With the noisy arrival of brush and broom, Miss Ray's impatience vanished, and she was thinking to herself, "I'll pension Mary Ann when I'm mistress of Ivandale; and missing Ivandale, I see my way quite clear to a less pretentious, but maybe quite as easy a position—but I must recollect."

"She was pretty, very pretty," she said aloud, in reply to the lawyer's last request, and at this he nodded assent. "Her mouth was small, but well shaped, her nose was well cut."

"Exactly," replied he, migrating between the two-ply and the rosette.

"Her throat was round and full; her skin was fair and white; her hair was brown; her hands were small, delicate, and well jewelled."

"I trust they will be again," replied the absent-minded lawyer. "Yes, I assure you, I shall do all I can to make them so."

"I do not understand you," replied the lady in a surprised tone, "I was giving my recollections of the personal appearance of my mother."

"Yes, yes; certainly, of course—you said her eyes had—" he was about to say, "pretty pearl buckles in their centres," but craft stopped him just in time.

"Her eyes," said his client unconscious of the confusion in his mind, "were—were wicked eyes."

This assertion made him look professionally at the evidence, and he added, hastily letting go of the rosette and attaching again just below the portrait, "Evidence which must be suppressed."

"And I would like to suppress them from my heart and memory," she answered, with much feeling.

"Do you recollect her tragic death? Certainly, you do."

"I am not sure that she is dead," said Miss Ray, calmly.

"Certainly, certainly she is dead, and you well remember"—as the ground he was treading grew shaky the lawyer overcame the lover—"let me see, about fifteen years ago."

"Fifteen! fifteen! why, then, I should have been"—and she counted her fingers, tapering at the nails and dimpling at the hands—"seven years old. No, oh no, I was far away from them, and years before."

"You're not twenty-two? No—make it eighteen, that is, eighteen next birthday," and he begun to fumble in pocket, nervously, for the contents of the yellow, tender, and musty. He feared lest he had missed something she might have said concerning her mother, while he was lost in the labyrinths of the pearl buckle hearted rosette; he had fancied she was describing herself, so his

replies were affirmations, not questions. He had swam beyond his depth, and confused in brain, confused in intriguing, confused in every way in which a pretty face, pretty slipper, and pretty sly owner to these can confuse a bachelor, he drew forth his watch, and pleading engagements of importance, arose, saying,

"I will call again, Miss Ray, and see, in the meantime, if you cannot refresh your memory, and make it eighteen. I will then tell you of your father. It will be better for me to tell you of the past, I find. So you need only recollect sufficient to make it eighteen."

"How shall I do that?"

"I shall trust to your sagacity," and he took her hand, squeezed, sighed, and not daring to look at the two-ply, for on it rested the rosetted slipper, he sighed again and again, and the door closed upon a sigh.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"ROVER, DO YOU KNOW MR. WALLACE?"

To go back in our history to the day when Miss Thump and the blind man were at the morgue, we may recall three facts, namely, that Isaac Harold hurried from the shop of Boggs & Co. to the blind man's corner, but it was not occupied, so he waited until evening and reported the ready wit of Joe to Mr. Wallace in person; that Joe, after his visit to No. 40 Chapel Street, where he made partial engagement of lodging and boarding for a friend who was so mythical that he never appeared again to Joe or Mrs. Mutter either, hurried also to the blind man's corner, but like Harold found the corner without the man, so, called at Jericho and reported the ruse he had played to gain access to the presence of Margaret Ray, and returned so far as their roads lay together, with Harold; that Mr. Trout hastened also to the blind man's corner, and met with no better success than the two before him, but unlike them he did not report in the even-

ing to Mr. Wallace. Yet he had a strong desire to meet that gentleman, and this desire did not leave him for many days after, but he had not things so arranged to his mind that, upon more mature deliberation than he had taken when he so precipitously hurried to where he might have found one who could carry word of his desire for an interview, he deemed it quite prudent to risk the cool and honest manner of the man, who, he said, had too much honor for double-dealing, yet if himself wary of showing his cloven foot he might be able to draw from him what he knew.

So he let time pass, still mindful, however, that the blind man kept the corner, till the day after he had examined the yellow, tender, and musty. He had called upon Miss Ray; had picked more at the imaginary bit of dust on the shiny broadcloth, than he had picked from his fair client's life and memory such useful bits as would aid him in strengthening the claims; had listened more to the soft whisperings of love, than to the clear tones of craft and cunning, so of course, unheeded, the latter had deserted him; had failed, or thought he had, for he did not know thoroughly the owner of the pretty face, to make her see, without stating directly that she must falsify, that it would be quite necessary to so place dates in her memory, that she would be drawing near eighteen instead of twenty-two; then he thought a man of few words and some knowledge might unravel the tangled skein and make his course so clear that he should have his plans so well laid that when he next ventured into the bewitching presence of Miss Ray he should not need the promptings of craft and cunning—their work must be done before.

In a little haze he was regarding the what he might draw from Mr. Wallace and also the how it was to be done, for he began to realize with some mental trepidity the quaking ground upon which he was treading. The tremor at craft and cunning's suggestions he did not quail before. They had always been faithful aids, and he never for a moment doubted them. But love, with its dainty little foot encased in a prettily rosetted slipper with a pearl buckle heart, would pat on the same ground

—and the quakes and the tremors, the yellow, tender, and musty, held somewhere, he could not make out clearly the locality, by a silver barb with a gracefully knotted ribbon at its point, and the four years too many of somebody's life, the something that could not and would not come to light, and the confident manner of that somebody that her mother had wicked eyes—all these things were a complete mass before the eyes of Mr. Trout, and strive as he could they took no shape, no form; no single one stood out as a leader for the rest to follow and array themselves as upon the side of love, as upon the side of craft and cunning, as upon the side of things which must be cut down in time and softened in memory.

In this hopelessly mental confusion he sought the blind man and asked that he request Mr. Wallace to call at his office at his earliest convenience.

"Mr. Wallace, Mr. Wallace," repeated the blind man to himself. "Rover, do you know Mr. Wallace?" he then called aloud to the dog, who pulled so hard at the string that the master was jerked off his feet while his hat met with the same fate from off his extended hand, and it fell, but he did not. The dog caught it speedily, however, between his teeth and returned it.

"Do you see how much he knows?" said the man turning to where he thought Mr. Trout might be. "You see, sir, I am a sort of finger-post here, so many leave word with me if anything or anybody is needed, and when that need comes I am expected to point myself to the just where these many may be found."

"But it would suit me far better, my friend, if you would point me and not yourself to where this man Wallace may be found." If the sightless could have been for the moment given sight to look upon the blandness with which this was said—blandness at his own merry saying and at the thought he might outwit easily the man without eyes, and thus give himself an insight into the whereabouts of this honest man, who kept himself so aloof when he was needed. "I can save you the weariness and peril of finding him," he continued.

"I may be poorer than I am now," returned the mendicant. "I may be more unfortunate than I am

now, but I shall never betray confidence entrusted to me."

"You are true, then, in whatever you promise to do, for good or for evil?" asked the honest and well reputed Trout, pulling at the fob-chain as if he saw a new bait, but did not know how to swim for it without too much commotion of the waters.

"What I once promise I will do, sir, for good or for evil," the man replied firmly, extending his hat in the direction of approaching footsteps and saying, "Please, sir, aid the poor and deserving."

The passer dropped a coin into the hat, received the thanks of the master, and the friendly rub which Rover always gave the donor, while the wag kept time to the rub and hurried on.

"Do you make much in a day?" asked Mr. Trout in a preoccupied way, not as if he cared so much for the welfare of the man as he did for something to talk about till he could swim quietly.

"It depends upon the day and the weather," replied the man evasively. "I am not always able to be here, and as the weather grows cooler and damper, I shall be here less and less I fear."

"I told you once I might aid you; do you remember me?"

"Perfectly; you are the attorney, Trout, from farther on in the Lane."

"Good; you told me at that time that you never forgot footsteps you had once heard."

"And that I never do, you may believe, from the fact that I have not forgotten yours."

"Proof enough, proof enough; ha! ha! as good proof as I want, sir. Hi! Rover, hi! old fellow," and the fob-chain was dropped to give the white fingers, with their well-paired nails, a chance to fillip at the dog, who lying crouched at his master's feet, looked up without raising his head, and muttered, grumbled, and then growled.

"Rover, Rover," cried the master, "up, sir, up, and be a good dog. The gentleman will be kind to us as he promises, I know by his voice, and you will get the better meat by it. Now, up, up, and show your gratitude."

The dog did as he was bidden, but there was no heart and no spring in his jump. He allowed himself to be caressed, but the white hand was a little chary of its bestowments, for the tail looked quite as ominous as the growl had sounded.

"He will know me in time; we won't fear trouble with that. Here is a bit for the legacy. You know you told me of the dog's legacy, to be, that is."

"Thanks, sir, thanks; you are very kind to the poor. I will serve you in any way, gladly."

"I shall see you before long. Being a lawyer, it may not surprise you that to bring the hidden to light, I need detectives, spies. It is all lawful work. And why not pay a needy man, if he can render the same service of a well-to-do? That is my policy, and I told you before, I am dubbed the counsellor in time of need; but that means, you see, when the pocket is so needy that it can't give for the counsel what it ought. I never charge, in such cases, never, and do as much, even more than I know most of my calling would. I will do for you and your friends at any time, with zeal. I know you and your dog are honest and worthy. I have often looked at you from my window in pity, and hoped I might some day aid you; not that I would want a poor, sightless man to be pulled here and there in a suit, not at all, but something else might be found, to need an adviser, papers to be drawn up; the legacy, however small, to be properly looked after. You will find me conscientious, very."

"You might be," said the man, "so long as I lived, but how could I tell what you might do when I am gone? The dog could be easily knocked on the head, and the legacy pocketed. I am on the lookout for somebody who will do the right thing by Rover, and as I am growing every day in pains, no doubt got by standing here so long at a time, in sun and in rain, the legacy may come to him soon. You are good, sir, without doubt, but I must have some assurance that the few pounds wouldn't be a temptation to let the poor dog seek his own food, or else, as I said, send him where he wouldn't need meat. I must begin to look about me, I know, and I may find nobody more trusty. Money, if it is ever so little, is such a temp-

tation to folks nowadays. It don't stop with the doing away of a dog, either. I know some things, if I am blind, and I can follow somebody, too, who has brought me where I am. I was not always poor; I was not always blind."

Another bait; swim cautiously, cautiously, Trout. Too much confused you are already. Too many hooks are concealed by what you most love—gold; little or big, in clear or muddy stream—only let it be gold, and you dart for it. Some day, legal sir, you may be hooked, sorely hooked, torn in the gills, and left flopping on the strand.

"Eh, eh," returned the lawyer. "You, too, a victim of somebody's love of gain? I thought as much, my friend; you have not the air and boldness of a professional beggar. Let me aid you, let me give you my services, free. If I win, a small per cent.; if I lose, nothing, not a shilling. I am only too glad to help a poor man like you."

"Let me come to your own room, sir, and I will state my case. I cannot give you much to begin—"

"Not a farthing, my friend, not a farthing. Glad to serve you, I told you. Yes, come and see me. I am laying myself open to the prying women of Lunley, by lingering here. Let me see; come to-morrow, say at ten; a good hour, very good. Calls not urgent then. Recollect Mr. Wallace, as soon as it is convenient. This afternoon at two, if he can. Good day, sir."

Another drop in the stream, and the hat drew down somewhat heavily with the half-crown he threw in with an air of charity, of condescension, of contempt for such small coin, and of blandness all so mixed that neither prevailed.

"You are so good, sir, let me do all I can for you. Good day. Stand up, Rover, and bark your thanks."

The dog obeyed, without any gratitude of heart, and with much sulkiness of manner.

"Well, well," said the attorney, as he betook himself with short, choppy steps, owing to the heaviness of the seal at the end of the fob, up the Lane. "I never looked for an opening in that direction, and yet, who knows what

it may turn out? Marplot's case, years ago, was more obscure, I dare say, than this man's; yet see where I am to-day in that. Almost got it, and Marplot, too, if he don't keep silent. I'll pay him well, on condition he leaves England. No, I'll do better, I'll settle an annuity on him, with the same proviso, and then he can't spend it all and be forever threatening me if I don't pay more. He is fixed, and after a little I can train Miss Ray so that—" here he was obliged to close his eyes, to keep out the patting slipper with its pearl buckle hearted rosette, the silver arrow, and the knot of ribbon: having put these down and away, he continued—"so that her memory will mellow the wicked eyes, and forget the surplus four years. But the one thing lacking, the lost link—no, it can't be lost; I must alone be its finder. Ha! ha! I know how to do that; I alone. That is it. If I am alone in it, there will be no telling tales. I might say now," and he rubbed his white hands together so closely that they were reddened, "I might say that I see three fair estates before me—two, anyway, and the third, this blind man's, may grow as I handle it; who knows? Two, at least, I say—Ivandale and Ray. The latter holds in it the Glentworth property, which swells it, it may be, beyond the Ivandale. I am on so sure a way, I might give that simple hearted, innocent partner of mine notice that I shall soon retire. But I will wait till I have seen this man Wallace; yes, and heard, too, the blind man's story, for I might find it would pay to keep in the legal trade till that was well manipulated. I suppose Marplot thinks I might let him know how near I am to claim Ivandale and carrying out his plan. Well, I will see him soon, cool him off, or rather, wipe him off, the slimy dog, and some day show him what I claim. Lucky fish, you are, Trout, and all in such clear water, too!"

By this time the breath of Mr. Trout had become so short that he could spend no more of it in speech. And it is just as well, perhaps, for a little must be left for climbing the long flight to his office, and some also for the bland smile and suave manner with which he would there greet Mr. Thump, the clerk, and even the charwoman, if she were about, so pleasing and plausible

did he make himself to everybody, this honest and well reputed lawyer.

The blind man listened to the retreating footsteps, took the half-crown from his hat, ran his hand along the string till he came to Rover, who was so intent upon growling and showing his teeth to the self-satisfied form chopping its way up the Lane, that he did not notice the hand till it was upon him. He started up, head, ears, and tail, jumped lightly about, and lapped the hand.

"Here, here, Rover, good fellow, we know what we are about." The master addressed him in a tone so low that the dog put his head down close, ceased jumping, lapping and wagging, that he might not lose a word. "Be a bit more friendly, and our work may be the sooner done. You and I, good Rover, have stood in sun and fog: I have listened; you have watched. We stood days before the first nibble from this Trout so wily, and we have waited weeks for this, his second nibble, which tasted so tender, that he will come soon again, do not fear. If we can make him inclined to swallow next time, we will keep the bait in his mouth, till time to make him feel the hook. Then, Rover, you and I will not stand here; we will live on the legacy, or if we see fit, go to a more cheery climate where the sun and the fog are not forever at strife, and neither ever conquers. It was as hard, good Rover, for me to give thanks in a becoming manner for his half-crown, as it was for you; but there is what we are wronged out of, you and I; and those we love, were wronged more than we; so if he will help us win, we must not mind his smile that has no meaning in it, nor his offers that have no heart in them. Our thanks are just as empty. You have always played your part well, Rover, till now; and if I have made you see that our waiting has not been in vain, and will soon be at an end, I know you will help me hold the bait just as it should be held, trolling-like, gently on and on, till, hi! how suddenly the hook will sting, and the Trout be—where?

"Then frisk, wag, jump, bark and lap for joy, good Rover. Our work will be done, and a good work it will be, too; but oh! that ever it should be necessary to do it! There is where the sorrow comes, the heart-stab, the tear

unbidden; but since it must be, we are glad to be able to do it, and how could your blind master do it alone? So you shall share the honor, the glory of catching this Trout. Now, be more friendly, old fellow, and as we have done enough for to-day, and must let Mr. Wallace know he is wanted, we will travel to Jericho and find him. The day is well on to its middle, and he must be at the office in Lunley by two o'clock; so we will take ourselves off."

The dog put his paws on his master's shoulder, laid his head down on his paws, gave two or three short, quick barks, as if understanding the present, and meaning to acquiesce in the future.

The master turned his head upon the side till it lay upon the dog's, and continued, "I knew you would understand, good, faithful Rover. Our rovings will soon be over, I hope, and what an old age of ease you shall have. Up! up! and let us hurry to Jericho. Mr. Wallace, you remember? Ha! you know Mr. Wallace!"

The dog stepped down, the man stood up, took the leading-string in one hand, the cane in the other; and Jericho was their destination.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE TROUT TOYS WITH ANOTHER BAIT.

THE fob-chain was uneasy. Its great seal was swung about as if there were no chain to be tortured and twisted, pulled and jerked. The knees crossed and uncrossed themselves, adding lustre to the broadcloth. The boots had been superseded by low pumps held together by broad silken ties with exact loops and smooth cross-pieces over the looping. The hose that these pumps displayed to such advantage were silken also, but finer threaded, fairer spun, and of fairer color than the ties. The hands were still white; the middle finger of the right was blotted, but the contrast was the stronger for that, owing

to the necessity of swinging the fob, torturing the chain, and exercising the knees. The quill which caused the blot had been abandoned, and the hand which held it was engaged by the aid of its index-finger and thumb in searching with renewed vigor for the same imaginary bit of dust which was so assiduously hunted for, but not found, in the presence of Miss Ray. The revolving seat became uneasy at the lack of success in the pursuit of this dust, so it began to turn as if to put the broadcloth in every light possible to favor the cause. In one of its revolutions it stopped short, for tap, tap, it heard upon the curtained glass door, a *facsimile* of the one beside it which concealed the junior as this did the senior partner of the firm of Trout & Thump from the outer room where anybody could step in and be received by the clerk on duty.

"Come in! come in!" came from Mr. Trout. The voice he gave this bidding in, to the unseen expressed belief that somebody had probably called upon him, and a shaken confidence in his ability to comport himself so exactly to his mind as to find out all he could from this somebody without letting himself be found out too much in return.

"A gentleman on private business, sir, who has appointed the hour of two," came from the clerk very closely upon the "come in, come in," from the lawyer.

"Show him in at once," said the latter gaining so fast over his nervous fears as to turn the chair, so that it faced his table and, consequently, brought him into the same relative position with that article of furniture which was well strewn with papers written upon, scribbled upon and blank, folded straight and crumpled, quills made, unmade and worn out, pointing to briefs and lying idly and untidily upon blotters; and amid all these Mr. Trout was busily, bustlingly searching and scrambling with one of the aforementioned quills over his right ear, but that it happened to be an unmade one he did not notice, but which his visitor, whom nothing escaped, so keen was his scent on the track of his game, did notice.

"Mr. Wallace, indeed! Mr. Wallace," and so bland was the smile of welcome, so warm was the right hand

extended while the other felt anxiously for the crown lock, which had long been among the irrecoverable, that if Mr. Wallace had not known the man better he might have thought the smile was a veritable smile, and the shake of the hand heartfelt, and the astonishment not feigned when he drew forth a heavy timepiece, and with it, the fob and its great ending—the seal—exclaiming, "Can it be two o'clock? It is, it is; how time runs with a busy man! I have never found anything that could beat it, sir; never! And the trouble is you cannot catch it; hurry as you will, you cannot. There is no use in trying; I gave up the race some time ago, and yet there are some people—"

("Shut up!" said craft, "don't you see what a fool you are making of yourself? You are talking and don't know a word you are saying. Catch time! catch time! you'll be caught by something worse than time, if you don't take care how you show your weakness."

"Hold your tongue," here piped in cunning. "Turn off what you have said as some of your well-known wit, 'play upon words' you call it, I believe, and give one of your blandest. Don't you see that honesty keeps cool and calm? Now, how can we find its weak points unless we are the same? We will help you, but you must not expect it, if you are going to let yourself out as a fool the first thing. He's quick-witted, he's sharp, he sees through you. Shut up, now, and let us work. First turn off what you said. Play on it, or prance on it, or anything else, so you regain as much as you can of your lost ground at the outset.")

Acting at once on these suggestions he continued, "There are some people who can beat time." Here he looked up with his mouth at its broadest and his eyes at their narrowest, prematurely grinning, each in its way, at the wit of its owner. "I know a man who can do it so—one," and the white hand, with five fingers extended, came down; "two," and it went to the left; "three," and it went back to the point in the air whence it had started. "Such people are lucky to be able to beat time. "Now, Mr. Wallace, here is a comfortable seat, and we shall be undisturbed so long as we choose to

confer with one another. First, sir, let me beg leave to arrange some papers of importance to my many clients as you caught me at my busiest—"

"I am sorry if I have anticipated the fulfilment of your request by even a few moments," began Mr. Wallace drawing out his indicator of the whereabouts of the great runaway—time. "I know a man of business does not like engagements kept ahead or behind the hour set for them, but I think I am doing neither."

"Right, sir, quite right, I am the delinquent," said the lawyer, leaning here and there over the table in search for documents which mated, paired, and matched, while the fob swung the great seal aimlessly about, endangering the stands of ink and the racks of quills.

("There, there," whispered cunning, "you have said enough about being busy. Too much coloring to your picture won't do. Sit down and go to work. I am here; craft is here. We will pit ourselves against honesty, and win, if you will do the square thing by us. Give us full sway over you.")

"Now I am ready, Mr. Wallace," he went on, after listening to the above admonition, while tying a bundle here, and clasping a package there. The chair turned easily, noiselessly, till its occupant could face his visitor. "You say, that is, you told me at our last, first, and only interview, some weeks ago, that you knew somewhat of the estate whose heiress I represent."

"Yes," began Mr. Wallace, settling himself back without confusion in the leather-cushioned chair, which matched the one occupied by the attorney, only it did not revolve. "Yes, I know of it, sir, and have known of it for some time—a long time, in fact."

"Ah, ah!" returned Mr. Trout in a tone that to his visitor's ready ear meant, "then you are just the man I would like to know, too."

"Yes," continued the man who was honest, too honest, Trout had always thought, for his purpose, "it would not be in the least surprising if I knew of this before you did. Not that I am pressing or going to press any claim upon it, but that I would like to see it saved from the crown. That is my interest, one that you must

admit gives me no reward; so it is not that I seek, you see."

"But you might be rewarded, sir, and would be, no doubt. Your simplicity is rare. Do you not know that such a service as settling, by your knowledge, the estate —estates I should say; there are two, you know—in the possession of the rightful owner would be handsomely rewarded?"

"It would be of little moment to me," returned Mr. Wallace. "Have you found the rightful owner, as you term her?" and he looked searchingly into the face of the man before him.

The revolving chair turned a little, but the arc it described was short, for cunning whispered, "Don't flinch," and the lawyer answered boldly, "I have, sir."

"Without doubt?"

"Without a shadow of doubt. But one link is missing, and that is—"

"Is the proof of marriage between her parents," said Mr. Wallace quietly, taking the words from his lips, "which has not yet been found."

"Exactly, exactly," and nervously, quickly the knees uncrossed themselves, the white hands slid down the lustrous broadcloth, till one rested on either knee, the exactly-tied pumps rested also, but upon the floor—this they could just do without too much of a drawing up from the region of the heels, for revolving chairs, it must be known to the reader, are necessarily somewhat higher than those of ordinary construction, and as we have heretofore ascertained that a fob-chain was always found to suspend over a short lap, and this latter would call for a corresponding shortness from the knees down, so we say the pumps were most fortunate to find the chair tilted upon that individual thread in the great screw upon which it was balanced, that gave them rest upon the floor, although the display of silk hose was so great, that one was forcibly reminded of a boy who had outgrown his trousers in length of leg.

To go back to the slidden hands. We said they rested on the knees. They soon began to rub, not to give strength as when they were in the presence of Miss

Ray, but to express an inward satisfaction at finding, with so slight exertion, the very man he most needed, and also to give himself time to think carefully, that he might act cautiously, cunningly, craftily.

"You have been well informed, but have also not been informed that it is liable to be brought to light any hour, any moment, perhaps; that records are being searched which will soon place the title clear legally," he finally added.

"Indeed!"

Mr. Wallace may have been surprised at this decided success the searcher would meet with, or may not have been. His air, his look was equivocal. He kept still, however, and retained a passive manner with it all, which annoyed the attorney.

"Yes, at any instant it may be in my hand, and then nothing remains but immediate action; immediate action to place the estate in the hands of my fair client." The very thought of it started the hands on a newer and quicker traversing of the lustrous knees, while the body bent forward, and the eyes narrowed again, as the mouth broadened.

"I am glad, very glad that the time of settlement is so near at hand, for the one to whom it justly belongs—but this can be only of the Ray side, for have you proof that the last of the Radnors is dead?" and the questioner again looked fairly in the eye of the Trout, who was beginning under these suggestions, covertly given, facts coolly stated, and questions, which showed knowledge of the subject, frankly asked, to swim uneasily.

"There's a chance to turn to your own advantage. You see, he knows more than you thought he did, so make the most of him," whispered craft. "Yes," added cunning, "you've paved the way well for the hidden proof which shall come to light when we are ready for it; he, he, he!"

"Now," cried the lawyer in suppressed glee, which melted speedily into blandness, and from that into confidence, "you are a cli--no, not a client, beg pardon, but an adviser worth advising with. You hit the nail at one blow, and that the first one. This is the very point

upon which I wish to confer with you; this question of death or no death. If it is death, my client finds the last block removed; if no death, why on this very point I can keep it from seizure by the crown. And it is consoling, sir, to know that if it is no death yet, it soon will be. In mercy's name, how long does that man want to live? He, if still alive, must be now—let me see, I have it in my memoranda."

"To save you the trouble of reference, let me say he will be ninety-eight on the third of November," Mr. Wallace quietly asserted.

"Ha, ha, you seem well posted on the coming—I wish you could be quite as exact regarding the going of this slippery fellow." Nettled at every bit of information his visitor volunteered, and yet hoping for some new clue which he might secretly work upon, Mr. Trout tried to appear satisfied, delighted with the course things were taking.

"I may be soon—at least, I hope to be. For as you say, if he has not gone over, his feet must, at least, be on the line between this life and the other."

"Yes, Mr. Wallace, that is logical reasoning of every other man in England or out; but this man has never lived like other people, if the stories of him are true, and I fear he won't die like other people either," and the shining place on the crown which had been made so by the many passings over it of the white hand in search of the lost lock, gleamed far at the side, for the head was turned in that direction, while the smile overspread the face.

Had not Mr. Trout said something funny?

It might be, but Mr. Wallace was too earnest in the object of his visit, for it is quite probable that he would have called if he had not been requested to do so, had no ear for humor, and no heart for jest, and said gravely, "I have traced him and lost trace, but I have not yet abandoned the pursuit."

In an instant the head was erect, the smile gone. Here was one who might prove disastrous or advantageous to his cause, but the manipulation must be skilfully done. He saw at once that this man was playing a game as well

as himself; but there was a rural honesty, sincerity, and frankness about him that discomfited the wily lawyer, and he listened for suggestions.

Craft said, "Make him your friend, if you can, but your confident by no means."

Cunning added, "Let him alone and he will tell all he knows, but be quiet yourself. Hold fast to the claim of your client in all respects. Bold front now. The game will run close."

"And as you are so good, Mr. Wallace, as to volunteer other information, may I ask when you lost trace? You are not obliged to give more than you see fit. I am already possessed of surety on every point but this, as I tell you; but I already have a scout out for that very thing, and trust he may not scout in vain."

"Yes, I know him; his name is Barley." So calmly and without an undue movement of muscle was this said, that Mr. Trout was brought suddenly to bay. He endeavored to look unconcerned, and be unconcerned. He struggled for mastery over his surprise, and he also struggled for breath, which he suddenly declared was much impeded by the close atmosphere of the room.

Mr. Wallace noticed the endeavoring to look, the endeavoring to be, and the strugglings in vain, but he seemed unmoved as he went on.

"To reply to your question, Mr. Trout, I will say that I lost trace when he left Wenham."

"That was sometime ago," said the lawyer regaining his composure. "I have knowledge of him since then."

"I have no doubt your facilities as a legal gentleman are greater than mine. So if you knew of him at a later date, I fear I can be of no use to you, and may as well not prolong the interview; but I will say that if I learn of aught that will help this cause upon that score, you shall hear from me at once. It may be just as well to keep my name and my knowledge in the shade. It can do those who are aiding you no good to know of me, and might make them less zealous in their search. However, it is of no material matter to me whether I am known or not known."

"It is better, I find, that the information is more

thoroughly gained when one alone considers himself concerned, so of you I shall find it policy to say nothing. But let me thank you for your disinterestedness, and in the name of my client assure you that such a cause as you are serving unsought, will not go uncompensated when she comes into possession. A happy hour, that, sir, for one who has the blood of a gentlewoman in her veins, and is forced to live as she has been living since her early remembrance. That was a sad ending—the mother I mean." And the Trout not content to listen to cunning, but venturing into deep water, endangered himself to another bait.

"Yes, I knew her, and sorrowed deeply for her strange disappearanee," came the bait from Mr. Wallace as he looked at his watch.

"Then you might like to meet my client, her daughter, Mr. Wallace," said the lawyer quickly, and the next moment bitterly repented the rashness and heedlessness with which he had listened to cunning's "Be quiet yourself."

"I should, Mr. Trout, if the honor, the pleasure could be gained through you, but first gain her consent without letting her know that I was a friend of her mother—or I should rather say, an acquaintance—for to tell you the truth, Mr. Trout, I am a native of the pretty village of Wenham, and the details of the case are familiar to me."

"You may have witnessed the marriage. If so, sir, the estate is—"

"No, no, I did not; unfortunately it may be for your client, I did not," and for the first time Mr. Wallace showed some slight change from the calm, passive manner he had maintained. "But I must be obliged to bid you good day, sir, for another engagement calls me."

"One moment, one moment, Mr. Wallace, and I will let you go. Did you ever know of another heir to the Ray estate?"

"Another than Margaret? Pray who could it be?" The tone of the question was so replete with surprise, whether feigned or real, that the Trout again realized he had made an unnecessary eddy for himself in waters which within an hour had grown turbulent and muddy.

"Well, no one who is to be feared as coming in for a claim. He is a worthless fellow, or always was, I learn. Marplot, one Marplot; did you ever hear of him?"

"Dan Marplot?"

"That is his name, I believe. Let me refer again to my data. It sounds like Dan; yes, D. Marplot. You have a good memory, Mr. Wallace, surely."

"I knew of him in our younger days. But are you sure that he is related to the good old Major Ray? If that be true, let me warn you that the quieter he keeps, the slyer he is working, that is, if he bears the same nature he did in his youth, and there is no reason to think that he has outgrown it. I have no personal acquaintance with him of late years, but the blind man who brought me your request knows of him, I think, to his bitter grief. He may tell you more than I can. Good day again, Mr. Trout, and when, if at all, Miss Ray will receive me, the same person will bear to me your pleasure upon the subject. Good day."

"Good day," said the lawyer, who wanted to keep his visitor, and yet cunning was loud in her advising. "Let him go, let him go, and we will think over the best way to manage him."

So, after a brisk walk with thoughtful brow, and yet not troubled mind, Mr. Wallace knocked upon the little smoke-dried door of Isaac Harold. At once there was a stir within, both from a man and a dog, and there might also have been from a bird, but the latter was so slight that it could not be heard without, as the other two were. Isaac needed now no throwing on of the cloak, and adjusting of the sack, and pirouetting into the peaked hat, and then soon after emerging as if totally unconscious of there having been a rap upon the street door, but he came hurriedly to it, unbolted, unbarred, unlocked, unlatched, and admitted his evidently expected guest. We said there was a stir from a dog; and so there was, and a very lively one, too; and the dog who occasioned it was no less a dog than Rover, who found it still lonely and stupid keeping dearie company, and was boisterously glad to see his master.

While the new comer was patting him, feeding the

starling and smelling, not ungraciously, the bacon and the tea laid on at an unusually early hour—the one to broil, the other to simmer—Mr. Harold was bringing from the corner the leather-covered chair which we have found there before with the owner's assistance, and whose resting qualities are not new to us, or to Mr. Wallace, that is, for body.

"Not one word now, Great Heart, till we have supped," began the Little Man, with a wave of his hand in silence to what he thought were a few words of disclosure from Mr. Wallace, as he sank into the chair.

"I was only going to say," said that gentleman, "that you are having your evening meal at a much earlier hour than is your custom, or mine, and that I shall be in Jericho in ample time for the good things there set forth; so, now do not step out of your ordinary way for me, good Isaac."

"Hush, hush," the Little Man broke in. "Can I ever do enough for you? I told dearie that I knew you would be aweary, and so you are; aweary in heart, aweary in brain, and aweary in body. When will the last gathering come? The one more gathering, I mean, for *her* and hers," and his voice dropped into a reverent whisper. "But not a word, not a word till you have had a sip of my tea, my tea. Who makes tea like me, Great Heart? Ha! ha! ha! there is another kind of tea I shall make some day," he muttered to himself as he laid the little table for two, crowding somewhat the dishes, it is true, but making their contents none the less freely offered, and none the less freely partaken of. "I shall make it, and somebody will drink it, too. It will burn, it will boil him, it will broil him, but he shall never stop feeling, never. He shall drink and I shall keep it hot while he swallows and strangles, but never stops drinking, drinking. Ha! ha! what a happy cup for me, and what a sorry cup for him. But think of the great cup of misery he put to my lips, and I drank till there was not a drop left, and what did he do? He laughed, he sneered, and sneaked away; he blistered my heart, he burned my soul. Is it not time I made tea for him? Yes, Great Heart, and I am fast gathering what will make it. The pin is in the cushion,

only waiting and resting for him. "Now, Great Heart," he turned to Mr. Wallace, and with a low bow, which brought his great poking nose between his knees, flourished his hand, as soon thereafter as he was erect enough to do so, toward the table, "sit up, sit near, sit by. Dearie shall perch on the back of my chair, and your dog shall sit here between you and me, just where dearie can see him; she is so fond of him, dearie is."

"Time's up! time's up!" came a voice from the hand of Mr. Wallace, where the starling had perched herself for the expected crumbs.

"Yes, time's up for the broil and the simmer, and if it was only up for something else, Great Heart, you wouldn't be so weary in here," and Harold put his long thin hand upon his heart, shaking his head sadly.

"It will be before long, Isaac; but as you said we will eat. Your tea makes me hungry, not thirsty, for such as you make is food as well as drink." And he perched the bird over her master, sat down himself opposite and pointed to the dog's place by his side within dearie's scope of vision, which, had the dog known it, would have been much inclined to beg leave for a place under the table, or behind his master's chair, for it was impossible for him ever to reciprocate dearie's affection, and therefore to appreciate her delicate flattery.

Method was still mixed with time in the usual proportion, so the water for the laving of the clear china cups, saucers, plates which did not match, the spoons, knives and forks which did not mate, was heating to a boil while the tea was sipped and the cake and preserves eaten. This was a red-letter day in the quiet, lonely life at Blue Bottle Court, and must be marked with something sweet, so these were daintily minced and munched by Harold and dearie, while Great Heart ate them as if they were not out of the ordinary course, and his dog ignored them disdainfully, perhaps because dogs in general care not for them, but more probably because dearie found them so palatable.

The meal over, the dishes disposed of, the crumbs brushed from the table, the floor and the hearth, Harold laughed, "Method, time; without one, where would the

other be? Where would I be, it's better to say? By method I've saved time, and with time I've saved pounds enough to keep dearie and me from want and cold, that is, if we don't live too long."

"Time's up! time's up!" screamed the bird, hearing her name mentioned affectionately, and supposing it meant a reference to some goodies laid away, thought she had best announce the fact that the time of their concealment was at an end.

"No, no, dearie, time is not up; I must contradict you. We are nearing a gathering which the sack cannot hold, I hope, but after that I see no reason why time should not be up below here, where there is so much to do and so little time to do it. It is quite as well to be hanging up one's sack, and be on the road where none is needed, and work where, though there is much to do there is plenty of time to do it. I shall expect to find you there, dearie, and I shall sort and gather, sort and gather among the birds there, till I find you, and then the crumbs and the hempen, how good they will taste. But, dearie, don't perk your head and look so roguishly at me. There is something to be done before then. Yes, and it may be something sad and weary for me, I can't just tell. I ask *them*, and they shake their heads and don't tell me."

While saying this, he had re-filled the bird's drinking cup, brushed out her cage, and then held out his finger toward her; she alighted on it, looked sharply for more dainties, whistled disapproval at the absence of such, jumped into the open door, again calling, "Time's up! time's up!"

"Yes," he continued, turning to Mr. Wallace, "when the Great Chimney smokes and puffs, I feel when one wrong is made right in it, another will be done. I want to get out of the Chimney, Great Heart, I do, and I shall when *hers* has been gathered. I must smell the fields again. I must feel the dew in the morning. But here, what can one feel, even if he is near the top of the great puffing, snorting Chimney? Could the fresh dew be found where the smoke rolls out at every writhing within? I mustn't talk about it; I mustn't talk about it. It draws

me up, draws me up in the legs, in the arms, in the head, and worst of all in the heart. It draws me sometimes so, to think of it, that I can't get abroad early, no I can't, Great Heart. I make more tea, I put in it sticks, pins, needles, and I sit in front of the fire while they simmer, and I laugh while they boil, and I laugh loud while they bubble, and I straighten out while they hop up and down, on head, on point, and I fold my arms and think how they pierce, how they prickle, how they tear, how they lacerate when he drinks a cup of them. So while I am waiting for the making of this tea, the sun does what it never has done before since I began to make gatherings —it gets abroad before I do. The thought of that, too, draws me up, and sometimes I miss good gatherings, but I can't help it. Why, sometimes with *all* the thoughts that come, Great Heart, the thoughts of all the cups that have been simmered and drank, all the needles that have been plunged into hearts, it draws one up so that when I begin to loosen, I catch up the sack and run after the sun for fear if I stay in where the tea is simmering, and the big pin in the cushion waiting, that I shall never straighten again. Curse him! curse him! But I must listen now for what you have to say—once or twice will do, up and down," and the hands were thrust out, the open palms fell upon, the long pointed shoes were up, the head was down, the shoes were down, the head was up, across the room, once, twice, and he was on his feet. "Ready, Great Heart, ready."

He drew the old pin cushion in front of the leather-covered chair which Wallace had again sunk into after he had partaken of the good meal and had declared that he felt the better for it. The thin legs were doubled very pointedly at the knee, making the shorts draw very tightly over the surface they covered beneath with a corresponding looseness above; the slender arms were drawn around the knee; the long fingers were clasped to secure them; the face of the Little Man was full of eagerness, and yet a shadow of dread there lurked beneath, and this he confessed, when looking up into the face of Wallace, he began the interview by saying, "I am ready, and I am not ready. I want to hear, and I don't

want to hear. If you bring out anything new that he has done, and you see it begins to draw me up, stop at once. Let me first get the cushion that has the big pin waiting in it. So I can pry him now and then."

"Do not be alarmed, Isaac, I have nothing of him to tell you that is new. The lawyer is the one I shall tell you the most of. You know he sent for me?"

"So the blind man told me," laughed Harold with a merry ha! ha! ha! "that's good; yes, I met him. He was on his way to Jericho, and I was on my way to an engagement with some gatherings awaiting me in Soho—you might not believe how my trade with the nobs increases. Well, that's nothing now."

"Yes, I got the word from the blind man," returned Mr. Wallace with a smile quite as significant, "and not being sure of plenty of time, I sent the dog with the note to tell you I would call on my way from Lunley Lane; and I have, and found so hospitable a greeting for the body and soul, that I must thank you again for it, good Isaac."

"Hush, hush, Great Heart," said Isaac. "The lawyer, now, and not the thanks."

"Yes," began Mr. Wallace, "we will come to it now. I was on time, exact. He was nervous; he pretended I surprised him. I did not. He looked anxiously for my coming. He played business bustle, but I read him. He did not know what information I was possessed of, and he did not want me to know how much he was. So he hesitated, referred to memoranda, and I told him quietly what he sought. It startled, it stunned, and I left him thinking he had pulled wool over my eyes, for in his endeavor to overcome the startling and the stunning, a cunning look twinkled in his little eyes, and he made me, or tried to make me think that he considered it very lucky that I had fallen into his net."

"And did not see," chimed in Harold, "that the net was yours, and the draw to be made by and by?"

"No, certainly not; he is a sharp lawyer and a cunning Trout, too!"

"But bait, good bait, such as you can throw, Great Heart, will coax out of nook the slyest."

"I hope so; that is what I throw for."

"And you'll catch, you'll catch; only don't get so aweary as you did to-day. It made me feel like drawing up to see you. But now for your gatherings from the Trout, open your sack and let us see."

"Yes, yes. Isaac, listen close now, and remember them. First, I let him gather that I had long known of these estates; that I want to keep them from the crown, and want no remuneration for service, and that I know the one link needful for the Ray estate."

"Ha! ha!" broke in Isaac, "but you did not tell him where it might be found?"

"He told me where it was—no, not where it was, but that it was being searched for, and might come to light any moment. And then he saw his way clear, being sure of the heiress."

"I've known people, Great Heart, to be the surest when they were the most mistaken," again broke in Harold, looking at the nondescript piece of furniture that held the "papers of state."

"Now, here comes my gathering, Isaac; don't put it in the same sack, his and mine—that he is sharp enough to make the link. That is his game."

"Then it is no wonder that they are liable to come to the light any moment, and when they do, we must look sharp, Great Heart."

"Now, do you wonder I looked aweary when I came? Next it was his turn to gather, when I asked if he had proof of the death of Radnor. He toyed around this bait; he looked as if he suspected what it might hide, but after a little he struck out boldly for it, and feigned that this was the very thing he desired our interview upon. It was not that, nor any one thing else. He feared I knew something, and wanted to know what, and he found out."

"Not all, not all, though," cried Harold, unclasping his fingers, rubbing together his hands, and stretching his mouth to show a set of sharp teeth; and before he had drawn himself together again, he took out the big-headed pin and plunged anew into the cushion upon the floor by his side.

"No," continued Mr. Wallace, "not all, nor all that awaits him. I let him gather that I had traced Radnor and lost the scent. He said he had a scout out. I said yes, Barley by name. This startled and stunned worse than all. I had let him gather before, even more than when on leaving, I told him I had known Margaret Ray's mother, upon which he seized the straw which was that I had witnessed her marriage—well, well, never mind that now—he asked me to call upon his client after gaining her consent."

"And will you go?"

"Go, go? certainly I shall go if need be. Now, I was about to take my departure, pleading an engagement with you, you know, good Isaac, when he drew me back, asking if I knew of another heir—distant to the Ray estate. I was surprised, and so disarmed him on that point, till he told me who it was; and I warned him, and said the blind man could tell more of him."

"Ha! ha! and so he can, so he can. And when does he go to see this great fish fuss and flounder? to feel him, I mean. A blind man can't see, can he, Great Heart?"

"That depends upon how blind he is," returned Mr. Wallace. "And now, what do you gather from what I tell you?"

"That he is making the gatherings for himself, and not for his client; but if he can't get them without, he will make a gathering of her too."

"What do you mean, Isaac, what can you mean? I never thought of it that way," and Mr. Wallace started so violently forward as Harold's words made themselves clear, that he jostled his knees rudely. "Beg your pardon," he apologized, "I never thought—but what makes you think so!"

"*They* tell me so," replied the Little Man, with head bent as if listening.

"Ah, yes, yes; I see it now. I knew he was leagued with Marplot to wrest from the heir the Ray estate, and could not see why he seemed overjoyed at the hope of placing it in the hands of Margaret Ray. I see, I see. Ah, I will help that. It is as good a way as I can punish

him for his cunning. I care not, Isaac, to bring him before a bar of justice, but Marplot I will; so help me heaven, I will," and his clenched fist in its great muscular strength came down with such force upon the broad arm of his chair, that dearie, who had grown drowsy from the sweetmeats, and curled herself up for a nap, was jostled nearly off her perch, that the dog jumped up with a loud bark, but Harold moved not in surprise. He began bobbing after the cushion which had lost its place and been slipped under the leather-covered chair, by the involuntary moving of one of the long pointed shoes. Having found it and the pin, he began a terrific charge with the latter, muttering, "So and so, so and so," at every word giving a fresh plunge up to the very head. "And then the tea, I will have it ready; I will pass it over the bar, and justice will say it is good for him when it burns and blisters. Yes, Great Heart, take him to the bar, and I will be there with the hot tea. Now, that don't draw me up; no, it is when I see no road to the bar that I draw up."

"Isaac," began Mr. Wallace after several moments of deep thought when the surprise subsided, "I see that Trout is for himself, that Marplot is for himself, and we must be for ourselves. There must be a gathering made of Radnor; if he is dead, we must prove it; if he is not, we must know it. Who will gather?"

"Whoever can do it best," answered Harold quickly.

"Can Joe, I wonder? He has had little to do but watch for the visits of Trout, but he has done that well and without complaint at the stupidity of his task."

"He is faithful, hoping for something more stirring; and every time I go to Boggs & Co., after giving Hiram a word of comfort, I run up to see Joe. Good, good and honest; but ain't I more used to gathering?"

"You go, Isaac? It would be a hard matter to let you do that. Who will keep the papers of state? Who will gather in your place? Are there no lady's maids yet to be seen? Who will—"

"Take care of dearie, too," interrupted Isaac.

"True, who will? she would not stay at Jericho, and she could—no use, Isaac, I can't spare you. But we

will hear, before we decide, what Trout and the blind man say to each other. I will be here to-morrow night; it may be late, it may be early. Let me see before I go, the papers, Isaac, and then I must be looking towards Jericho, for to-night I go to the quay. I go every night, lest he might come to see Mr. Hamper, and I lose one word, one breath of self-accusation that will lead him where he can—"

"Can drink," interrupted Isaac, "drink what I shall make. But, Great Heart, you know how safe the papers are. I have had them long years, and they are mine to guard and deliver when you call for them. So, if I must give them to you to look at, I will; but they do set you aweary in heart, and that won't do, now. You know what's in them, and the fingering of them does you no good at this time. Wait till all is right, and then look."

"Yes, yes, you are right, Isaac, they unnerve me, and the time will soon be to pounce, not in the dark, either. How long, long you and I have worked at this—and what shall I do when all is right?"

"Too fast, Great Heart, too fast; all is not right yet, and you will be busy to make it so."

"True, true. I must hurry, it is darkening; and from Jericho to the river is not a short step, let alone from here to Jericho. One question, Isaac. Mr. John Hansom has put the tracing of the heiress of Ivandale into the hands of the attorney Thump. Do you know it?"

"Ha! ha! ha! that's good. John Hansom, where of?"

"Address the blind man, or Isaac Harold, Blue Bottle Court."

"Good again, that makes me straighten out." One, two, up, down, down, up, across and across the room, and then the pointed shoes are firmly again on the floor, while the round head encased in the silk cap is where it should be, four feet twenty from the floor.

"Here, sir, here; up, up," said Wallace, whistling and snapping his fingers. The dog jumped, barked, wagged and without even a glance at the cage of dearie, who was eyeing him lovingly, followed his master who was preceded by Harold to unbolt, unbar, unlock, unlatch and

open. This done, Mr. Wallace shook his host warmly by the hand ; the dog rubbed his nose on the black silk stockings, then bounded up and lapped the cheek. The door soon closed upon dog and master, who turned to Jericho.

CHAPTER XXIX.

GAFF SHOWS HIMSELF POSSESSED OF IDEAS.

If the air was clear, the sky cloudless, the stars twinkling gayly, and the moon shining calmly, so much the better could each ripple be seen, so much more looked the bank of water—thrown up by the swell of a crossing boat—as if it concealed a human form; and as it moved on toward the shore, rising and falling, so surely it seemed as if upon its last breaking, the form would arise with a curse for him who watched it, not be washed up and borne away from his sight forever ; if the sky was so heavy and leaden that the stars and moon could find no opening, so much the more weird and awful rolled the bank toward him, so much the more awful the *that* that would arise from it ; if neither stars, moon, nor sky heavy and leaden could be seen, and the fog veiled them, veiled the swell, veiled the bank that came from the swell and bore its burden so unerringly always to him, then still more to be dreaded was the uncertainty when it would reach him, but reach him it always would, and curse him it always did, not that the lips ever did as the lips of the mortal curse, but to him who could read in the outstretched finger, upon the parting lips only what he justly merited—a curse—how could it speak in other accents ?

There, night after night, long before he had ever met Peleg Hamper, long before he had ever began to watch Snatcher peeping over the quay when the heave was great, peeping over for the coming of the captain and first mate ; long before he had been drawn to the morgue

and made to look upon the fair young face that rested upon the cold heartless slab that received the outcast and the pure, the convicted and the innocent with the same immobility; ever since he had returned from the long journeys we have already referred to as prosecuted with will and without flinching, with money and without, till he had traced all gone who could claim Ivandale, but one, and her he had summoned through his honest and well-reputed adviser to London; ever since this, we say, he had been drawn by the cord night after night, to watch for the bank of water that came from the swell, and if there was no swell it came just the same, and the cord had held him till he would fain plunge in and end all. But whenever that moment came, we have seen that he was drawn back, that invisible hands bound up the cord, only to pay it out at greater length upon the next visit, and he was left to his own wicked will.

Since he had spoken the few words with Peleg Hamper upon the day when Miss Thump and Miss Hamper were playing the rôles of Charitable Sisters, and upon their return from the house and shop of Mr. Gregory Layem, had come upon him, he had been drawn more strongly than ever to the moorings of Snatcher, and hoped chance might throw him upon her captain again; but chance, or the cord, or luck, good or ill, or a foreordained result, or what you will, threw him upon her first mate, Gaff.

"Lookin' fer suthin? yer 'ead aint up 'nough fer straight-out work. D'ye mean 'arm?" was the salutation he met with one night from that officer who had just parted with his captain, the latter hurrying to Wreckers Court with a load "'ooked up" and in from the wreck of a barge that had ventured up too far and found herself stranded at low tide and pulled off too suddenly as high tide joined with a still higher wind and blinding rain. Owing to the wind having the audacity to send the rain at its own rate of speed into the eyes of the crew and the captain as they turned out one by one to meet the issue against them, it is not to be so much wondered that the barge yielded without long struggling, when it is known that larger, sturdier vessels farther down stream

lost their moorings, plunged forward, rocked sidewise, and between these two erratic and highly uncertain movements, especially when the plunging was dictated by the wind, and the rocking by the disturbed waters, had either gone on toward the opening to the sea, or else like the barge acknowledged themselves beaten and let the wind dismast them, and the waters wash away their cargoes. And these cargoes, whether heaved over by the crew or swept over by the waves, must come to the surface again; and for their coming days after greedy eyes were strained and hunger-thinned hands were stretched, hooks were improvised from old iron pokers tied to sticks; and with these the children of those who were far out in boats, flat and well rounded, in scows and rafts watching and catching, pulled in what had escaped them or had arisen nearer shore.

Some might have said it was because he held himself aloof from the Wreckers of the Court and the wreckers on the river, that Peleg Hamper turned Snatcher away from the flotsam, away from the jetsam of the down stream, and would not be found earning his bread in common with them. Some might have said it was selfishness that sent him up stream, as he knew of the barge whose cargo would be rising likewise, and might be met on its way down the river or watched for on its way up to the surface. Be it either way the watchers and fishers he left behind were the richer, for Snatcher was quick in her turnings after the floating somethings, and the hook was unerring in its aim.

So, it was after this cruise which had brought Snatcher heavily laden to shore for the third time that day and evening, that Marplot "fell" upon the first mate, who ceased unloading from the boat his part of the booty to be carried to the court, when he saw the skulking, down-looking figure draw near.

"Yes, I am looking for something, but it was lost too long ago to get it back," replied Marplot answering Gaff's first question; and being in doubt as to the honest return to the last, for whether he meant harm or not would depend upon what advantage it would be to him to do it. Turning to good account the wiping away of the

glands' secretions, for Gaff mistook it for the drying or attempted drying of tears, and speaking in a whining, wheedling tone—indeed, of late, he could not talk long in any other—he at once struck the first mate of Snatcher as a mourner for one who had been "'ooked up" already, or else was waiting quietly *in* the bed or restlessly *above* the bed of the river for that process of being brought to the recognition of friends or the gaze of the curious. If the lost had been found, Gaff could not see for what he was still looking; if not found, here might be a reward, so another reason, good and sufficient, he saw at once, for letting the booty yet unladen remain in the boat, and that already on shore, rest safely from marauders, beneath his ample and firmly set boot.

"War it lost up or down?—from the barge up, or the three-mast down, I means. We allus 'ooks up the belongin's first, ye see," and he pointed to what he stood upon, and what Snatcher still kept.

Marplot, so intent upon his own suspicious thoughts, that he heard only the words, "the belongin's first," said, "Then if these come up first, you can't always tell which—I mean the bodies that come up afterwards—they come from—"

"An', mister, what 'ud we care? 'Ere's a 'at we pulled in last 'aul; an' think ye when we find un to 'ook in, when we gets it 'ere tied near Snatcher, an' awaitin' fer un who looks at 'em, an' looks at a book, and says, 'Turn it over,' which sometimes the water does fer 'im an' saves us the bother, an' looks again at the book, an' then looks at the dead-'us cart and says, 'Drive up close an' take it.' D' ye thinks while 'e's doin' all this, lookin' an' lookin' an' a makin' up o' 'is mind, that war made up afore 'e seed it, d' ye think we tries cloze on to' em, to see if 'at an' coat fits 'em? Haw, haw, yer green, mister, in the business. No, we takes the belongin's an' we gives up the 'ooked up. We've got some belongin's to-day, to them who'll come up after a bit, but most on' em are from the barge, an' we'll 'ave 'er bimeby if we keep a sharp lookout, but there'll be many a un doin' the same."

Gaff had never made a speech so long and uninterrupted in his whole life, perhaps because he had always

been with those who thought they knew more than he did on all subjects, perhaps because nobody ever thought he had an opinion or an idea on anything particular, or everything in general, and perhaps because he never essayed to say much, or enough to give himself any standing as a person possessed of an idea or an opinion. He had most abruptly shut down on any attempt of imagination to again assert herself within his mind, when years before he had, at Meg's suggestion, dilated and drawn up his nostrils for the imaginary sniff of Mother Martha's soup, for he left the sniff unfinished to this day, because the soup was still more imaginary than the sniff. So, it could not have been a fancy that led him to the belief that the inspector always made up his mind prior to his inspection; it must have been arrived at from analogous reasoning. However, that is not pertinent to our story; it was only suggested by a query as to the road he had mentally taken to hold this opinion, and it also shows that Gaff saw and noticed what he did not always speak of.

"Have you got many belongings?" asked Marplot, little heeding the traces of recent wreckage. "Don't you know that they might be prized—" a wipe of what Gaff counted tears, "by the—by those—" a whine that answered in the ears of the same for a long drawn moan.

"That feels sorry they be gone," added Gaff to the sentence for whose completion he waited a reasonable, and it seemed to him a respectful time after the moan.

This brought the handkerchief from the face, cut short another whine begun on a lower key, and drew up the look-down head which turned toward the water, as if it heard there a re-echo of the words of Snatcher's first mate,. "Feels sorry they be gone." But it must have been a delusion, for the cord had been laid away, looped up tightly, and the waters rolled up no bank when that did not hold him over them: they were busy now, bearing up and on the traces of their power when their helpmeet, the wind, chose to mingle with them.

So, finding nothing to dread from without, he again buried the face in the handkerchief, and shook with grief, Gaff supposed—and why should he think it caused

by anything else? And feeling touched at such sorrow, he sat down upon the "belongin's" of the barge, and touched Marplot upon the shoulder, motioning him to do the same.

"War it a cap'n, a mate, or un on deck? Mebbe it's un that'll bring its own belongin's. Sometimes they does it that way, keeps 'old on 'em, ye know. An' sometimes it looks as if the belongin's 'eld on too, to show who it war they war a bringin' up."

Marplot shuddered. He had not thought to take a mourner's part in an interview of this kind—it would have been impossible to so play upon Peleg, but with Gaff it was easy enough; so he concluded to increase the long drawn moans, bury his face as often as it was consistent with grief and the needs of removing what the glands sent forth, thus working upon the feelings of the first mate till he should be fortunate enough, perhaps, to find out what he wanted and yet dreaded to know.

"It is nobody just lost," he moaned and moaned, rocking himself back and forth upon the end of a spar that had been caught on the way down, a relic of the two-mast, and as it rested upon its middle could assist in the swaying of the body, and so afforded a most appropriate seat for a mourner—it may be that Gaff had the facility of the spar in view when he motioned Marplot to it. "That is what makes it hard to bear, that hope is gone."

"Then it warn't the barge, it warn't the two-mast—but what war it that sent 'em to the down below? We ain't 'ooked up any o' late that 'ud do to sail with ye," and Gaff gazed closely upon the crouching form that tilted upon the spar at the least motion.

"It isn't of late, and it was nobody like me, it was one I knew in better days. If I could find a trace, a trace," the grief now so shook him, causing the spar to bob up and down at such a jerky speed, that at each convulsion afresh it threatened to send him where a "'ook up" would be necessary upon his own account. Gaff had witnessed but few of the interviews between his father and those seeking information, or leaving descriptions of the probably lost, and possibly drowned. The excitement of looking down into, and 'ooking up from the muddy waters,

the share of the reward, if earned, which "dad" always gave him, and his interest was at an end. How friends conducted themselves was of no moment to him, so of course this heart-broken creature lent a new look to the business for Gaff, especially as there was no one to take the case from his hands; he was sole referee, and rather liked to feel that he might hold the happiness or the still deeper woe of this mourner in his keeping, and besides, there might be a few shillings ahead, he could not hope for pounds when the close gazing showed the coat of bad fit, faded color, and bare threads, the hat rubbed every way but the smooth way, and so often had it been subjected to these various ways that it was doubtful if it could ever be again, under the most favorable conditions —dampness and the presser's iron—brought to know the direction its nap first took, and for this scrutiny, Gaff had not trusted to the light of the stars; he had held up a lantern so wicked that its rays shot down and not sideways, and as he was tall and was also standing when he took observations, the rays struck where the lantern aimed.

"It might be as I could remember 'em as 'as been 'ooked up fur a bit back. War it old, or war it young? War it gaiters or boots? That's the way I calls 'em up sometimes, and then by the fit," here he looked down at his feet which were covered by boots, no doubt made for a higher instep and narrower ball, for a slit upon the top relieved the pressure at the former, while one on each side of the main joints, gave ease to surplus flesh. "Now, the un as had these war 'boots;' they 'ud fit a nine, but I'm 'leven fer boots an' a twelve fer gaiters, so I calls this un a 'nine boots.' I've got under lock at the court yander, a mate o' gaiters, seven, small, very small that, but 'e war a thin chap. I remember 'im well, an I calls 'im, ye see, 'seven gaiters.' So if ye can tell whether the un ye wants 'ad boots or gaiters, an' what they 'ud fit, I might tell if it 'ad belongin's."

"But it couldn't wear boots and it never wore gaiters," came from the depths of the handkerchief, for the mourner dare not look up lest he might see stepping from the water-bank what it wore, so he bowed again

with the down tilt of the spar end, and came up again with its rise.

"It couldn't?" and Gaff took off his hat, scratched in his matted locks for the reason why "'ooked up" could be found so delinquent in this matter, having previously rendered themselves liable to choose whether it should be boots or gaiters. But this reason was not forthcoming, so having slid the tin door before the bull's-eye, he deposited the lantern under a bit of plank, and himself upon the other end of the spar on which the mourner tilted. This caused the latter to forego the end seat and step around to the side, and as they were not in point of avoirdupois much at variance, the spar ceased its bobbing and the grief-stricken was placed under greater exertion to sway.

"I thought I 'ud ease a bit fer ye," Gaff said, as if in apology for the liberty he had taken.

Marplot did not feel the ease rendered so much, or with such relish, doubtless, as did the spar, but he saw no time must be wasted, for much more had already elapsed since it was necessary for the proper securing of Snatcher, and the bearing of the barge's belongings to Wreckers Court; so that Peleg, ever on the alert from the life he led for something new and strange to come to light, might return to ascertain what had occurred to keep Gaff so long behind him. So he hid his face again in the handkerchief and mourned for a shorter period this time, and swayed but twice, yet still concealed his eyes and so much of his mouth as was not absolutely necessary to the sending forth of the "young woman;" and the convulsions of grief followed one another rapidly, for he heard, or thought he heard, footsteps, distant as yet to be sure, but firm, decided and not daintily picked, which were signs that might be made without difficulty to indicate that Mr. Hamper was about to put his worst fear into reality, so the sooner and stronger Gaff could be touched the better.

"Now, don't ye feel so bad, mister, if it ain't a 'boots' or a 'gaiters' yer lookin' fer. I ken easy tell the rest o' the 'ooked up. I calls 'em ribbins or strings. Ye see, the nice uns—we doesn't often find 'em though—'ll 'ave a

bunch o' ribbins on the toe or som'ers, an' the poor uns 'll be glad o' a string—tow, or leather, or a rag mebbe—anything to keep the shoes on, an' I doesn't see why they wants to do that—keep 'em on, I means—fer the feet gits wet any way, an' if they'd jest leave 'em on shore it 'ud save a deal o' dryin' an' greasin'. Now, ther' war un sometime back—an' a clean purty un she war—she wore, slippers, the only un since Meg war found along shore. Ye knows, Meg, doesn't ye, sir? everybody knows Meg."

"Meg who?"

It vaguely occurred then to Gaff, strongly upon after consideration, although the latter he did not enter upon till it had been proposed to him by another person, that the convulsions ceased too suddenly for such paroxysms of real, true grief, that the face that emerged from the handkerchief did not look drawn with mental anguish, that the eyes were small, but not half-closed with weeping, that both the face and the eyes showed an eager interest in the "Meg who?" and the voice which uttered it quivered with a mixture of surprise and fear.

"Meg Hamper; who did ye s'pose, mister? Ye needn't ask any more—she's too good to tell about."

"Is she your sister?" The sigh of relief at the "Hamper," which followed the "Meg," was great, yet suspicion lurked in the mouth, and about the manner of everybody who spoke to, and everybody who came near Marplot; so he was impelled to follow this string whose knotted end had suddenly and unexpectedly presented itself.

"No, an' I ain't agoin' to tell ye anything more," and seeing that Gaff was disposed to be sullen if he followed beyond the knot, he turned it to the best advantage.

"You see," he began again, whining and wiping his eyes, but scenting danger from the far-off footsteps, thought it better not to sink his face in the handkerchief, "you see I am so in hopes she is not lost—that she was rescued, if the papers—"

"We never rescues," interrupted Gaff, changing his seat to one opposite, where he could have a better view of his visitor. "We finds, we 'ooks, an' we keeps belongin's. We'd rescue if we could, but someways Snatcher never 'eads fer 'em till they've been down too long fer

that, an' to tell ye, mister, 'ow I feels about it, thar ain't many on 'em as it 'ud pay to do that with. A 'ook up is better than a rescue. Ye ties 'em up by Snatcher, an' ye knows thar be so much awaitin' ye from the dead-'us people if thar ain't a reward; but a rescue ain't sure—it might promise all it 'ad, to git out, an' when it war out, take to its legs an' run—they beent the best kind, them rescues, mister; give me the 'ook-ups an' I ken make a livin'. But thar war un, the nice, clean un, 'slippers, ribbin slippers,' I calls 'er, as I 'ud been glad to rescue. Ye spoke o' papers, mebbe she be the un ye look fer. She 'ad 'em, papers, an' I got 'em; yes, but nobody knows it, mister; I thought I'd keep 'em."

"Oh! oh!" moaned the mourner, suddenly lost again in the handkerchief; and as the other spar-end had lost its weight, there began the alternate swaying of body and bobbing of the seat which he held more comfortably at the side than at the extremity. "Oh! oh! I believe it's what I am looking for. Do tell me, do tell me, quick; oh! oh!"

"If ye feels so bad, mister, 'ow is it ye cares more fer the belongin's than the 'ooked up?" Gaff's wits seemed suddenly to sharpen themselves, or to be sharpened.

"She is gone! she is gone!" came from the depths of the handkerchief, "but these would be of value to the living."

"'Ow, mister?"

"They would give property — pounds, shillings, to those they belonged to." Here the face was raised pretty clear of its covering.

"Ye needn't take the trouble to make it clear what property be, mister. I knows it be pounds; but many?"

"Yes, yes, a great many; oh! oh!" Down went the spar-end by mistake, so the mourner, when he found it and himself upon it going too, swayed and mourned "oh! oh!"

"'Ow many on 'em could I git?" Gaff blurted out with his elbows on his knees, his head on his hands, and his eyes bent searchingly on as much of the face as he could see.

"Twenty, twenty!" exclaimed Marplot, seeing Gaff's game, and showing his face in full at the same instant.

"That won't fetch 'em, mister."

"But that is more than you would earn in a long time," began Marplot in a business-like manner.

"An' that's what I wants," returned Gaff in the same, and with as much determination of driving a good bargain.

"Thirty, then?"

"No, mister, it beent what I wants."

The footsteps were intermittent—a few, and then silence. So matters must be precipitated, and he said,

"Fifty, that's a big sum."

"Mebbe," came from Gaff in an indifferent way, "but I thinks I ken git more fer 'em."

"Who? how? where?" came so thickly from Marplot, upon each other, that Gaff saw he had unintentionally hit a sore place, and also saw that it would be best to follow up this purely imaginary source of income as if it were authorized; and began pushing together the wood and other belongings of the barge.

Thus, between the suspicion that somebody else was on the alert for them, and the cessation again of the footsteps, Marplot said, without on the instant realizing the amount of his offer, "Hundred pounds?"

"That's like," returned the first mate, dropping the wood and sitting down again; "that's a bit above t'other 'll give," he added, inwardly chuckling over this bit of strategy, and beginning to think what he would do with the fortune.

As the steps were nearing, Marplot could not afford to ask "who?" again, so he said, "Let me have them."

Gaff looked at him by the starlight, and looked at him by the light through the bull's-eye with the tin door slid off, and then "haw, hawed."

Lest this might be a trap to catch him and a signal for the springing of the trap, and not seeing anything in his request to cause this outburst, Marplot looked about with fear.

When Gaff had so far overcome whatever he saw that was ludicrous as to be able to speak, he said,

"Lemme 'ave 'em too, mister."

"What?"

"'Undred poun's."

"I have not got them with me, to-night—this is unexpected."

"I ain't neither, but ye jest fetch 'em, an' see what I ken fetch too."

"When?"

"In the day. 'Tain't often I'm left alone like this o' a night."

"I can't come in the day."

"Ye can't?" And Gaff looked down at the nine boot and the eleven foot very thoughtfully, till from out the boot, from out the foot, or from out the matted locks, a long lank way above the boot and the foot, came an idea to which he at once gave freedom in "Send some un an' I'll take 'em up in Snatcher—up stream, I means."

"What day?"

"Who might ye send!" asked Gaff, as if a reply to his question was necessary for a proper answering of Marplot's.

"A young man."

"Tell 'em to go by the end o' Wreckers every day when the tide's full, for a week, an' if I beent noways busy an' ken paddle up with 'im, I'll be on the steps o' No. 2 o' the court. An' the poun's?"

"He will bring them. And now I must go. You are a good fellow," and Marplot arose determined to get away as fast as possible.

"Jist look 'ere, mister, afore ye goes; I thinks ye forgot suthin'."

"What?" asked Marplot, looking around to see if he had dropped some article by which he might be identified.

"Ye forgot to find out 'bout the un ye felt so bad fer. 'Ow d'ye know 'er belongin's be the belongin's ye seek?"

"Oh, I am satisfied," returned Marplot, beginning to move off to the right.

"'An ye forgot suthin' else, mister." Gaff saw his hurry, and saw also, though still vaguely, why his strange visitor had tried, and would still try to dupe him, so he

felt at liberty to show him that he saw it. Marplot turned again and looked the query "What?"

"Why," sneered Gaff, "to cry a bit more afore ye goes."

It was a sting that twinged as Marplot moved off this time to the left, and had not gone many steps when Gaff called after him for the third time, "Pull to, pull to, mister." He halted for the third time also, and impatiently waited for the first mate to "pull up to him," which he did in long ungainly strides, and dropped anchor, when at what by those of medium height would be considered far from speaking distance—at least, so far as the place of the feet were concerned, but Gaff knew the latter did not need to be nearer than they were, he leaned over, so long and so elastic was his body, and reached Marplot's ear with, "Dad's got suthin' o' 'ern ye might like. A big fat ring. If ye comes agin when 'e's 'ere, I doesn't know ye, mister, an' ye doesn't know me."

CHAPTER XXX.

"BELONGIN'S IS KEEPIN'S TO THEM AS FINDS."

MARPLOT kept on his zigzag course as rapidly as consistent with the not straightforward and the stealthy. He looked furtively around for the maker of the footsteps, but nobody was near who could have knowledge of them, and muttered to himself, at the same time finding much moisture to be absorbed by the handkerchief, so we may not catch every word of the soliloquy. "Fancy again, fan—" a wipe across the face in the region of the mouth—"lucky though. Hundred pounds! Bah! five as good to him.

"Sharper than he!" The thought of the *rôle* he had taken, and that Gaff had penetrated it, gave a fresh impetus to the glands; so we will imagine that Marplot concluded that Gaff was sharper than he looked, and feared that he might be too sharp for him before the

game was terminated. After this inference we will listen again, although it takes much dodging of posts and tree-boxes and a course which describes pointed scallops. "Barley's gone—luck! luck! Now it—" a wipe, "three for luck. Ring—fat ring—the—third. Hamph—sharper—Gaff. If fan—still—well manage him. Curse fan—"

The dashes do not, we hope, represent to the mind of the reader wipes. Lest he might be so misled, let us state that they stand for words and parts of words, lost as the speaker of them was lost now and then to the ear of the writer, who, being more straightforward upon foot, if not in any other way, found himself upon the right, with head bent down, when he should have been moving to the left, and in the same embarrassing position upon the left when he should have struck off at an acute, very acute angle, and thus made with Marplot the point of another scallop. So, as we find it not highly satisfactory, following, and still more so what we catch, or rather, what we lose between the wipes and the scallops, we will let him continue alone his way to Poorly's Resort, only adding that the next night, and the next, and every night, until the one cold one soon after, did he find himself drawn to the river, held over and pulled back, and either before the cord was unlooped for its work, or after it was looped and laid away, he sauntered to Snatcher's place of mooring, and as we said sometimes found her and sometimes not, but never saw her captain.

Did her captain see him? Let us go back to Gaff, who had picked up the wick in the lantern, rubbed up the bull's-eye with his coat sleeve, and thus had a more satisfactory view of the what was left in Snatcher, especially when he pulled the spar-end near the margin of the quay, and placed the lantern upon the mourner's seat, which was now well up in the air; and its present occupant not being heavy, it did not tilt up and then over, over and then up, according to what the burden was. And, one bit after another, Gaff piled the cargo of Snatcher upon shore, threw the paddles after it, swung himself *after* the paddles and *into* the presence of Peleg upon one side, and a dog with his master upon the other.

"Ye war long, Gaff, in 'eaving the cargo off Snatcher," remarked "dad," with a knowing look at his son, upon whom the rays through the bull's-eye fell so directly that there was no escaping them till some of the barge's belongings had been removed.

"Yes," returned the first mate, without, it might be, quite as much deference of manner as such an officer should show to his superior, "I anchored a bit myself; the tide war a bringin' Snatcher up nearer at every 'eave, so I let 'er swing."

"An' ain't ye 'ad anyun to watch the 'eave with ye? I thought I 'eard talk 'ereabouts, an' some un a pullin' off, as if it war agin tide an' wind."

"Thar be some o' the Wreckers back from the two-mast down stream, an' mebbe ye 'eard 'em. I did," and Gaff's head was bent to avoid "dad's" gaze, while his hands were busy prying up a broken plank, pulling out a bit of sail or extricating from the rubbish as carefully as was allowable, for the better price from the junk shop, an iron hoop that from diameter and quality told of a bailing bucket beaten out stave by stave till naught but its embracers were left.

"Now, Gaff, ye promised, an' I likes to see ye keep in deep water. Ye doesn't lie about it an' say that thar war no un 'ere, an' I likes that, too, but I knows thar war some un, an' this dog knows it, and 'is master knows it."

Thus brought suddenly to an understanding that he had been watched, and no doubt overheard, too, every word Gaff made answer, as if the bargain had been lawful, and in nowise to be looked at as calling for any but the most hearty congratulations from his father, both for shrewdness of the bargain and future good fortune, "Ye knows it, the dog knows it, an' 'is master knows it. I knows it, an' the man as feels bad knows it, an' when I gits it we'll all know suthin' else."

"An' what might that be, Gaff?" asked Mr. Hamper, inwardly pleased at a keenness which he felt sure he detected beneath the exterior of this apparently aimless speech.

"That I've got it," he returned, without slacking in

the assorting of iron here, firewood there, cook's utensils broken, bent, and leaky on this side, crew's garments, torn, patched, and water-soaked on that side.

"Ye thinks 'e'll run foul?" again questioned "dad," with the inward pleasure coming forth as outward admiration for this trace of the least discerning power on the part of his son.

"'E's run foul a'ready," returned Gaff.

"Now, make a clean deck o' this, Gaff; a clean un. Did ye know the man afore?"

"No, an' doesn't know 'im now."

"But ye knows suthin', first mate, or ye would look up and make a clean breast of it, as I tells ye."

"No," came from Gaff, laconically; "no cap'n, 'e's the un as knows the suthin," tain't me."

"What might it be?"

"It might be good, it might be bad—more like from the cry it be bad; whatsumever it might be, I'm steerin' so that it might be I could tell 'is colors an' 'is sail."

"But the papers, Gaff, the papers, what made ye keep 'em and never say ye had 'em? Doesn't ye know they might o' sailed that sweet un into the clear waters she 'ailed from?"

"Forgot 'em," returned Gaff, with a curtness to be sure, but an honesty that brought conviction, truth with it. "Couldn't read 'em."

"And whar did ye find 'em? We looked 'er well over before we shoved 'er out o' Snatcher to be towed."

"Mebbe we did, but I slipped on 'em the time ye an' Meg 'ad gone to the dead-'us—slipped on 'em, an' so's not to slip on 'em agin, put 'em in 'ere," and he laid his hand on his shaggy coat, that was the reverse of the boots for size; while they were *nines* covering *eleven*, the coat, if the numbers of the tailor and the boot-maker run parallel, was evidently an eleven covering a nine; this gave him freedom of muscle that was not absolutely essential from the boots. The part of this garment upon which the hand came down with no gentleness, was the part, no doubt, which covered an inner pocket, for he soon after slipped off of the great horn buttons—no two of which matched—the other half of the coat, and dived

into the region of this presumable pocket, for he soon drew forth a small package of letters, apparently, neatly folded, neatly tied, originally, but the water had broken the papers at their foldings, and the friction after drying, that they had met with in this ample and miscellaneous depository of Gaff's, had fringed these breaks. He held them under the glare from the bull's-eye ; they were stiff, and crackled faintly as he touched them.

Peleg drew near, the dog drew near, the master drew nearer ; the first nodded to the last, and looked pleased ; the second sat down when he approached to what he deemed a proper distance, also looked pleased, and instead of nodding, beat a merry tune with his tail upon a large splinter that had, upon Gaff's further unloading, been knocked from the spar. The last bent over them and over Gaff, while his whole frame shook as he could, or thought he could, discern upon the outside one in a manly hand,

MISS MARIA RAY,
We h——

Upon closer inspection, by the lantern's light—for he caught them from Gaff's hand, in his anxiety to lay hands upon them—the name he saw as we have given it, the place also, for the missing letters were easily supplied.

" Ha !" came from the dog's master in a hiss between his teeth. " Ha ! how many times I have followed him like this, and there must be a last chance—chance never did this, and chance never does anything for me, yet I always happen on his track at the right moment. Little wonder that he would give a hundred pounds for these, and I—I would give a thousand, ten thousand, rather than not have them. A good clutch I've got. How Harold would put the tea on to simmer if he knew of this, and the pin in the cushion deep, deep it would sink beyond its head ; and the blind man, he would almost see at the touch of these. Ah, ah ! and *she*, *she!* is not her rest more peaceful ? But not so peaceful as it will be. And John Hansom, what would he say ? I must let them all know, all know." He still held them as if they were his own.

Gaff, seeing that he made no motion as if to deliver them, said, without betraying the least solicitude as to possessing them again, and yet his words were significant: "Belongin's is keepin's to them as finds."

"Yes, but you would not want to keep these, my friend, when you know that by doing that you are wronging somebody, and keeping back property from those who ought to have it," said Mr. Wallace, for he was the dog's master, most earnestly and impulsively looking Gaff full in the eye.

"That's what t'other un said," returned Gaff, not half liking the seizure, "an' 'e felt bad, an' ye doesn't, mister. 'Ow ken I tell which be right fer 'em?"

"But if you thought it right for him to take them, why did you not give them to him?"

"The 'undred poun', ye knows."

"Do you mean to sell only to the one who gives most, or the one who takes them in the name of justice?"

"Is that another un as wants 'em?" asked the first mate, with interest awakened anew.

"Yes," replied Mr. Wallace, "and will give you twenty pounds more than the other, with a good prospect of more in the future."

"Then 'e ken 'ave em; whar be 'e, mister?"

"I will answer for him, and give you a paper, and you can draw your money whenever you please."

"Ye doesn't mean it, mister?" exclaimed Gaff, with dilated eyes, open mouth, and distended nostrils. "Yer the craft as makes a clean cut through the water. An' the un as feels bad, what'll I tell 'im?"

"Leave that to me. I shall be down here every night to watch for him; for he will come: he can't stay away. Hold down the lantern, Gaff, and I will fill out this—" and he drew from his pocket a leathern book, from this he took a paper, from another a pen, and from another a safety-stand filled with ink. The lantern was held so nervously by Gaff, that Peleg's steady hand took it; the flame glowed brightly, the picked wick seemed to do its best, the rubbed-off bull's-eye was still undimmed, the rays shot through it gladly, some of them rested upon

the rapidly filled cheque, which was laid on a smooth part of the spar, some of them fell upon the nearly obliterated "Miss Maria Ray," and from that they turned and struck the eye of the holder of the source whence they came: he bent over the name, and bent, too, the rays in the same direction, by putting the lantern so close that he threw the cheque too much in the dark for even the keen vision of Mr. Wallace, who, finding the lines suddenly lose distinctness, and the words fast disappearing, looked to see the cause, and just then, Mr. Hamper, with fingers on the M, which he had been tracing, asked with a tremor in his voice, "Mister, ye be well up in letters; ken ye tells me that?"

"That first one?" asked Mr. Wallace, with a tremor, too; but that is scarcely to be wondered at when we think of the papers he was about to possess.

"Yes, the un as makes the clean cuts an' the sharp turns. Meg knows 'em: she bé well up in figgers an' manners, too, an' I ken say 'em all to 'er; but they does pester me when I ain't jest with 'er, an' more'n ever when they 'eave in sight so sudden like."

"That is an M," and the pair of gray eyes watched keenly for the next question or voluntary remark.

"Yes, yes, I thought so, it looks like it; but they do say readin' an' riten' ain't the same ways 'eaded; but that's it, that's it."

"Some persons write letters as you see them in reading," replied Mr. Wallace in Hamper's own terms, knowing these would better suit his comprehensive powers.

"An' it be the way to do, too, then folks might git well up an' not git so pestered. But what might M be 'ailed fer, mister?"

"I do not think I quite see what you mean, Mr. Hamper." It may be if he had chosen he might have caught the significance of the captain's words, but he saw there was a something to come to the surface and he preferred that it should come without his aid, for he had found silence, or at least a suppression, the better part always for his purpose; and this had been his advice to the blind man, who, by following it had gained from Susan Thump, the day they visited the morgue, her own

history and that of Samuel, and he had also by an apparent indifference, gained the interest of the wily Trout.

"An' I doesn't much wonder, mister. Ye see I war a salt afore I war a fresh, an' so I runs the current afoul sometimes; but ye knows some craft be 'ailed as three-mast an' some two-mast, a sloop, a schooner they might be, but suthin' tells me that un beent neither."

"The name, my friend, the name? is that what you mean?"

"An' that be jest it. I feels queer like to-night, as if I didn't paddle an' I didn't sail, but that I war on a smooth voyage. Now what might that be the name on? Anything but that un!" and he pointed to the name that began the address upon the outside letter.

"Yes," returned Mr. Wallace, using much effort to conceal his feelings—"yes, it might be for Mercy, it—"

"That beent the craft," interrupted Peleg, shaking his head, which was bowed slightly, as if half in thought and half in the desire to catch at once every name that might be given. "No, mister, thar war no 'Mercy' about it, that war clear to my eye long ago, when we began our voyage with 'er in the cabin," and he nodded his head and threw his thumb in the direction of his home.

It took more than an effort now, it took a hard pressure of the will to conceal the feelings as Mr. Wallace went on with "the craft," not noticing the voyage or the voyager alluded to.

"It might be for Matilda or—"

"No, no, mister, that be no craft as sails in our waters."

"It is not an uncommon name," was the reply.

"It be fer these parts. Now, come right to port, an' look well about ye. I knows it when ye tells its build. 'Tain't Marthy—ye see I'll 'elp ye along. My sister be Marthy, an' if ye can't ketch sight on it, I ken ask 'er an' tell ye some ways bimeby. 'Tain't worth the fret, mebbe, now."

"Was it Mary?"

"No, it be more masted 'n that, an' it be sumut like it in build; try agin, mister."

"Was it—was it—" the voice quivered, the tongue hesitated, the heart almost ceased its beat—"was it Margaret?" slowly came forth.

"Now yer struck it with yer prow, mister; that war it. Well, I can't tell it now, but I must soon, as suthin' in 'ere keeps a sayin', 'Boat ahoy! ahoy! ahoy! 'ail the cap'n,' Mr. Wallace, fer whensomever I thinks on ye or sees ye, I 'ears the shout, ahoy! ahoy! An' when I sees the un as war 'ere to-night, the waters frets an' the currents run into one another, an' the shout sinks. So, 'e beent the un to 'ail. I see ye be agoin to ask me suthin'. No, mister, no. It'll come soon when I does show 'er build; I knows it, but I can't do it now. I must fight with Peleg Hamper; I must put 'im in irons, I must. It'll come, it'll come, an' I'll be left on the strand. 'Igh 'eaven tide can't bring me off; wind can't blow me off. I be stranded, stranded, when the time comes. No, no, mister, not now," he added with a shake of his head as he saw Mr. Wallace was about to say something. "I be comin' to Jericho some day, but it'll be clearer sailin' 'n when I war thar last. Now I'll 'old 'Pryer' agin, so ye ken see. We calls 'er Pryer," he said in an explanatory way, pointing to the lantern, "cause ye 'olds 'er over the water an' she prys into the mud an' calls 'em up like—almost allus knows whar they be, so 'Puller,' that be the 'ook, most allus fetches 'em at its first send out. Pull to, Gaff."

Gaff drew near, the cheque was smoothed out on the spar, the rays looked brightly down and struck the words as they were traced, "One hundred and twenty pounds;" the figures, too, they shone upon "£120," the name they saw, for that was their business, it is not ours, and we might look at it if we chose, hereafter, when Gaff draws it, not the name but the sum, the £120.

No landed proprietor steps with purse-strings clutched more greedily than did Gaff when, folding up the cheque, he realized that whenever he chose the money would be in his hand.

Peleg laid his hand heavily on Gaff's shoulder, but not in weighty disapproval, "Ye be done as ye ought, Gaff. If ye wants a Snatcher o' yer own, I can't say no;

but I feels that the tide or the wind, or suthin' is a pullin' me without paddlin'. Mebbe it be Jane's craft that I gits into sometimes. If that be so, Gaff, stay in Snatcher till ye're the cap'n yerself, an' then ye ken do as ye likes. Mebbe git a first mate, as I did ; but git as good a un, that's all. I can't 'elp ye up," he pointed to the belongings of the barge, and turned wearily away.

"How ken I let ye know, mister? by the man as can't see?" he said, as he passed Mr. Wallace.

"Yes ; but friend, let me help you if you—"

"No, no, it be only 'cause the time be nigh 'ere. It must come, I knows, fer she war born a leddy, an' be well up in letters, figgers, an' manners; an' what she's born an' bred to, she must come to. An' me—I'll go to Jane ; thar be where my breedin' takes me, to mess with my first mate. I can't stay 'ere when she be gone."

Much of the latter was lost upon Mr. Wallace, for Peleg moved on wearily, sadly, towards Wreckers Court.

Gaff stood with one of the number nines resting on the spar, which had no desire to tilt now. It had witnessed mock sorrow, and it had toyed with the maker of it ; it had witnessed finder and owner sorely grieved, and when he turned away without carrying it, it seemed glad to be kept down under the eleven foot, where it could watch the drama more closely.

"If ye war to tell me the man's name as wants 'em, so I could tell the un as feels bad," said Gaff, after waiting for something from Mr. Wallace which did not come, for the latter was following with anxious look the retreating form of Peleg.

The salutation startled him, and he waited a moment to collect himself and his thoughts ; to do the first, because he was partly on the spar and partly on the broken plank, his pen was still unsheathed, his stand of ink yet unsealed and liable to an overturn from the dog's tail, which was starting upon erratic movements as he was deciding according to his own view of things, that as one of the party had walked away, his master might soon do the same ; so, while collecting these, Mr. Wallace had freedom to perform a like operation upon his thoughts, although he went about it not in the same manner.

"What agreement did you make with him regarding the delivery of them?"

"Didn't ye 'ear?"

"No, I was not near enough, and had all I could risk to keep my dog from springing upon him. Tell me in a few words, and you can then carry the cargo, for I have a long walk before me, and must be off. Down, sir, down, we will soon go," he quieted the dog and listened to Gaff, who told him of the indefinite time.

"Now, let me see"—Mr. Wallace thoughtfully counted upon his fingers the day, by their hoped-for events, or the hoped-for events by days—"that will do, that will do; one week from to-day, Gaff, swell tide."

"That be the time, but what be the word?" asked the first mate, evidently more perplexed with the undecided than the decided.

"You were shrewd enough in the game you played with him; I will trust you to manage anyone he may send, and for information, a good reward, Gaff. But this much, remember, not a word of Meg, as you call her, not a word of me."

Gaff, at first, looked very much as if he had lost a prop, but after a moment's thought he looked up with an expression of surprise at the confidence put in him, and said, "I be willin' to paddle alone, mister, thank ye fer the—" and he laid his hand upon the coat which covered the pocket. "I'll be Gaff Hamper, cap'n o' Cruiser" some day. I 'ad 'er named long ago, ye see; I been a lookin' fer it someways, but I never see just 'ow."

"Do you know how to get the pounds that it will call for?"

"No, but I ken ask Meg; she knows letters, figgers, an' manners, ye knows."

"No, no," broke in Mr. Wallace quickly, "say nothing of this to her now, nor of anything that has happened to-night, and then it will be a surprise to her when you get Cruiser; don't you see that would be better?"

"Ye be right, mister; thank ye, thank ye! I will ask ye when I wants it."

"Yes, that is by far the best thing you can do," returned Mr. Wallace, with relief. "Now, good night, or

good morning we might say. I'll see you again, any night, maybe. Give me your hand."

Gaff extended his left, and drew it back in embarrassment, for Meg, who was so "well up" in manners had taught him better; so forward came the right, and, as it never wore a glove—in fact, it is to be doubted if it knew of such an article—we cannot compare its size, but say that it was proportionate with the eleven foot.

"Good-by," came from Wallace as his hand was swallowed in the hearty grasp it met.

"Good day, good day," and as the master and dog turned away, Gaff smoothed something which he imagined still lay in his hand—no, not imagined, for we have found his attempts before futile, so we must say he still felt the small soft hand of Wallace, for he said between the smooths, "it couldn't swing a paddle, an' it—" just then he went to shake it again, and closed his own over —itself. With a frightened look he raised his eyes, and the spar end came plump in his face, for he had taken his foot off, and it thinking to watch the goers away, tilted, and the end was up. Many times while he was piling up the "belongin's" in the next half-hour, he smoothed with the left something he felt in the right and said, "It makes me feel as good to touch prow with it as to think of—" and slap came the hand upon the coat in the region of the concealed pocket.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE WIND UNINTENTIONALLY BECOMES USEFUL.

BLUE BOTTLE COURT was so still that a step upon its walk broke the slumber of Isaac. It was an orderly court, though the dwellers therein were poor—poorer far than the Little Man who lived near its entrance, and occupied what none of the rest could boast of—a house by himself; but this was due more to the dimensions of the

building than those of his pocket. We recorded the fact before, that it rose but one story, but we did not, perhaps, add that it comprised but one room ; so, after all, there was nothing to boast of in its occupancy, yet the court looked upon it as a private dwelling. Those of many lodgers could be entered by the public doors, the passages could be peered into, the stairs could be climbed, and the lower floor would think some visitor for the top ones. But in this little house no one could look, no one had the right of way into it but Isaac Harold, and he held himself aloof from all about him. True, the building was hemmed in and hedged in at the sides and in the rear by higher, smokier, greasier, and more dismal walls than it is pleasant to look upon ; but are the poor of London ever found where they are aught but hedged in and hemmed in, in home, in heart, in body, in soul ?

The step that broke Isaac Harold's slumber was that of Great Heart, not the dog, for the latter trod as he should at night, unheard. His master was too much agitated in mind to conceal the fact in his step, if he thought he did in every other action, for Isaac leaped from the little cot in the corner, straightened himself with but one somersault, however, and by the time the steps were at his door, he had slid into the shorts, drawn on the stockings, thrust his feet into the shoes, covered himself with his cloak, forgotten to remove his nightcap, which was the simplest contrivance possible—for with some it is such an elaborate article of wear—it was a red silk handkerchief, knotted firmly at the four corners, and the knot of such proportions that the edges drew tightly, and in perfect fit about his head. He slipped the bolt, unbarred the door, turned the key and stood bowing and grinning as his visitor was about to lift his hand to the knocker.

" Come in ! come in ! ha, ha, ha ! it makes me feel like straightening again to see how you look at me, Great Heart," he laughed as, after accepting his cordial invitation, the master and dog, after whom he closed, bolted, barred and locked again, stood in the room.

" I am surprised that you should be watching for us,

for it is not many hours since we left you," observed Mr. Wallace.

"I was not, I was not; does this look like it?" he laughed again, pulling at the knots that stood out like horns. "You never saw me in this before, Great Heart. Would I wear it if I expected you? No, no. So I will out of respect—" and he drew himself under his cloak with the nightcap on, and emerged in the next moment, with his head in more shapely and becoming attire—the black silk skull-cap, orange-peel shape, with the peel bits cut in two, and joined at their points, under a large button.

"It is an unseasonable hour, Harold, to call, so we must not look for full dress. I have been to the river, and I have—"

"Have seen *him*, you were going to say; yes, Great Heart, you were going to say," for Mr. Wallace shook his head. "I sha'n't let it draw me up, don't fear. I have been thinking since you left to-night, that I must not be drawn up so much. I lose time as well as the gatherings, and maybe I shall lose the lady's-maids, and those are what I most seek now. How can one tell what he loses if he don't go out and see what it would be if he wasn't out? So, tell me, Great Heart, I won't draw up. You have seen *him;* yes, you have! The ashes have been heaped upon the coals for the night, and the tea won't simmer. Ah! if I had known it, the hot fire you would have found, Great Heart! but the big pin is always ready and the gatherings of needles, those that I don't want for the tea, I take for the cushion. See where I keep it at night. I can't always sleep now, so I reach out and find it here at my hand," and he drew from beside his pillow the cushion. After stabbing it repeatedly and earnestly, he grew calmer, and said, "Now tell me."

"I will, good Isaac, or you will fancy something has gone wrong with us. So, now, sit down and listen."

"Wait a moment, a moment; dearie will be so downhearted if I do not tell her he is here," so he bustled up to the cage as he nodded toward the dog, who had stretched himself before the fire, paws extended, head flat upon them, eyes winking short and long winks, showing

that he could get weary and sleepy if his master did not. Dearie was so soundly asleep that she required several nudges from the Little Man before she peeped out from the rough ball she had resolved herself into when she bid her master good night. "Time's up! time's up!" she cried.

"Yes, dearie, for sleep just now it is up. See, see who it is. He has come; you know you are so glad to see him that I thought you might be angry if I did not call you."

The starling turned one eye, then the other towards the dog, whistled, jumped into the opening of the cage, for the Little Man had fastened the door so that it could not swing back, and cried again, but this time, "I'm in a hurry! I'm in a hurry!" and stood then arranging her feathers, so there might be some doubt as to the cause of her hurry, whether it came from a desire to make a hasty toilet, or to perch nearer the dog, probably the former, for she remained picking and smoothing in the doorway. The dog did not even wag his tail, did not even raise his ears at her appearance, but he looked exceedingly bored as he slipped his head between his paws, and held his eyes, closed by a slight muscular effort, which were soon taken in hand by sleep itself, and dearie perked and smoothed and whistled in vain.

Mr. Wallace knew it was useless to make protest to this inattention to dearie, so he sat down in the leather-covered chair he had not long quitted, leaned his head back and thought the papers were burning in his pocket, so eager were they to be read. Thoughts were burning, too, and long, long had they burned, and would have seared, shrunken, shrivelled a less generous, a less faithful heart.

Isaac touched him on the shoulder, saying, "Great Heart, you are aweary again in heart, in soul; I see it. I will sit here," and once again was drawn forth the old *prie-dieu*, his arms were folded across his breast, as if determined to meet with firmness whatever might come; the head was bent—he had put on the jockey's coat, yet still kept the cloak over his shoulders, for the air was not so warm as usual, owing to the fire being smothered for the night.

"I am not weary, Isaac, only sad that wickedness will find men to do its work. But I will tell you what I know you will ask again about. I crept to the river—or rather after I drew near the river, I crept softly along the quay, for I heard voices. I knew one was *his*, I always know it; my dog knew him, and so I dare not draw near enough to hear his words, for he would have sprung upon—"

"And left none of him to drink the tea. No, no, that won't do," said Isaac without raising his eyes. "I must break in once in a while, Great Heart, or I shall draw up."

"That is all right, Isaac. Well, I had to linger and not hear. Peleg Hamper had left his son Gaff at the landing of Snatcher, with whatever it is they—"

"Gather," suggested the Little Man.

"Yes, that will do; and *he* came along—happened of course—"

"Ha, ha, ha! happened?" yelled Isaac, unfolding his arms, throwing them wildly about him, and throwing off his cloak at the same time, "happened! Nothing ever happens with him."

"But something will soon happen *to* him."

"No, no, I am losing courage since I began to draw up so much. We have tried so many years to make something happen, Great Heart, that I am aweary, too. He will do me harm again, again, and the—the last. I know it, *they* tell me. Go on now—no, wait, my cushion, my pin, my needles. There now."

"No, no, Isaac, we will live, both of us, to see all right, and he out of our way. We will rest, rest, some day."

The Little Man looked solemnly—and Mr. Wallace in after time thought prophetically—upward, raised his finger, nodded, and in a soft whisper said, "Yes, up there where *they* live!"

"You meet trouble, good Isaac, let me meet you with something that will bid trouble hide itself," and he drew forth the water-worn, pocket-worn parcel.

"Ha, ha, ha! a new gathering! a new gathering! Do you wonder I heard your step in Blue Bottle! Do

you wonder? Do you wonder? Does anybody wonder? Open the sack, Great Heart, open; let me pick the wick, let me stir the coals, let me stab the cushion, let me straighten, let me do anything, anything, so I don't draw up before you get the sack open and the gatherings laid out," and he began to do each of these as he spoke, except the "drawing up," from which he was saved by the expedition of Mr. Wallace in untying and laying out the papers. The somersaults he was just fairly in the midst of when, chancing to come upon his feet near the leathern chair, he saw they were ready, and halted suddenly, drew the low seat to one side, pressed both the long thin hands tightly on his head and said, "I came near drawing up; when I do, the blood is all here, all here; it will burst out and trickle through my fingers, I think, if I don't hold it in this way. Now, now, Great Heart, read."

"I have not read them yet myself, and you must be patient, good Isaac, if I cannot read all—see, blurred—nearly gone."

"Ha! blistered, scalded! yes it looks like his work. Makes me think of the hearts he has—never mind, we know, we know; read."

The first one opened was so crisp in some places, so tender in others, that they drew a wooden stool before them, and laid it where it would meet less rubbing than upon the knee of Mr. Wallace. Spreading it out the two leaned over it, Harold with a candle, which shed its feeble rays gladly upon it, Great Heart without a candle, but with an inward light, which seemed to bring back those words and letters quite gone, and deeper those faint and jaded, soaked out, and crushed out, till they made quite distinct the following:

"In London, sick, alone, almost penniless. Let no one know of your journey, let no one see you leave. Misfortune has overtaken me, but with returning health, under your tender, loving care, I shall be soon myself again, and friends need not know that adversity threw me on my back in one of the poorest, dingiest courts of all London. Do not be surprised when you find me. A lawyer,

a friend, will meet you. It is he who writes this, and will conduct you safely to me. Let your coming to London be unknown. Heaven speed you to a man sick in body, heart, and soul!

"HENRY."

"S. S. Trout, Esq.,
"Lunley Lane, London."

Notwithstanding the outward light of the candle held by Isaac Harold, and the inward light of intuition, invisible powers, or what you will, held by Mr. Wallace, the foregoing was not so readily made out as it has been penned by the writer, or perused by the reader. It was conned and studied. Now a word at the beginning was quite easily deciphered; hope was taken that it augured for more of the same, but line after line was unmastered till, at last, near the end one, maybe, two words stood forth like sentinels pointing to what they guarded. Now again to the front ranks went the candle without and the light within, till one and another joined the band of the reclaimed.

Hour after hour passed, candle after candle went out, to be replaced by another and another: the starling slept soundly in the open doorway, the dog slumbered watchfully upon the rug before the fire; the readers, for greater ease, had drawn near to the table soon after the arduous task began. Great Heart still in the chair of comfort; Harold upon the wooden stool, which was just high enough to clear the floor of his shoes even to their long points. Heads may have ached, hearts may have grown weary, but they knew it not.

When the paper told its story as plainly as we read it now, the sun had looked into Blue Bottle Court for more than an hour. He had sent good-sized beams upon Harold's barred, blinded window, but it did not open; he had shot thread-like rays between the boards, slats, hinges, anywhere they could find a place, but it was still closed, no sign of life within. It seemed to quite puzzle the sun, he and the Little Man had run so many races together, even worry him, so much so, that he sent a ray into the heart of the green-grocer who kept a pennyworth shop on

the corner opposite Blue Bottle tavern, and who was accustomed to seeing Isaac astir betimes, so that it behoved him to tap upon the door and say that the pennyworth of milk, with the pennyworth of cream afloat upon it, was ready.

In this luxury—for a Blue Bottler—Harold had indulged ever since the grocer had been in his neighborhood.

The tap startled them both; the Little Man took the candle, hurried to the door without any of the usual precautions of pretending a hasty exit, to find an unexpected visitor; probably it was because he scarcely realized what he was doing.

But the sun which greeted him before the grocer, having the advantage of the latter—he could send in his beams large and rays slender upon the least giving way of the door—so put the candle's flame out of heart and light, that Harold stood before his caller holding it with blackened wick, melted, dripping tallow.

"The milk and cream, pennyworth of each, you know, two pennyworth for both," stammered the greengrocer, frightened lest he had offended the Little Man by so obligingly serving him at his own door, and might thereby lose the only customer he had ever had who had paid promptly, we might almost say, ever paid at all.

"Yes, yes," returned Isaac, reaching for the little black jug with the unoccupied hand; "yes, two pennyworth, two pennyworth. But the sun, the sun, how came he up before me? No, ha, ha! not up, for I was up before him; but out, I mean, out gathering before me. It ain't very often he is so much ahead of time."

"I don't know that he is now," meekly returned the grocer, "I don't; indeed, I don't think he is, yet he may be, too, now I come to call it to mind." Appalled at himself for again risking the patronage of this customer, he added the last by way of reconciliation.

"He must be," said Harold, setting down the candle and the jug inside, and drawing out a pretty crimson bag that may have hung—as it was a gathering—and no doubt did find itself once upon the side of some dainty dress, laid the twopenny in the hand of the shopman, thanking him for his thoughtfulness, then shaking his

finger warningly at the sun for his trickiness, turned within and re-lighted the candle. "It is daylight, Great Heart, but I know it ain't time yet. It can't be. It ain't long since we—"

Wallace interrupted him, or rather, contradicted him by pointing to the candle ends piled upon the table.

"True enough," said Harold, counting them, "I did wrong to the sun, then. I beg his pardon, while I open the window and let him in, rake the coals, put on the tea-pot; dearie! dearie!"

The starling peeped, whistled, and seeing Mr. Wallace, called, "I'm in a hurry! I'm in a hurry!"

"And so am I, dearie, so is Great Heart, but we don't feel in a hurry for the same that you do, though. You are for crumbs, and we are for desert. Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Little Man at his own wit, "Deserts, deservings, dearie. Ha, ha!"

"Great Heart, what shall it be? eggs and rolls, or chops and rolls? The grocer at the corner keeps 'em all fresh," and Isaac began drawing on his cloak and adjusting his peaked hat, preparatory to the purchase of whichever his guest would prefer. "Here is the grain that brings you good digestion, dearie. While Great Heart is deciding I will freshen your drink and brush out your cage. There again comes method with time. I have not mixed them so much of late as I used to do. But it is the drawing up, the drawing up that makes the difference."

"Good Isaac, a cup, or several cups of your tea will suffice. I must read more, and I need your eyes, your head, and your heart to help; and I must see the blind man before he goes to the office of Trout; the lawyer in Lunley Lane, you know."

"Yes, yes, of course you must see him; he must see you, and you must see each other; very good; ha, ha! that is good; the more I think of it, the better it grows. I must straighten, it is so good."

A thrusting out of the hands, a falling upon the open palms, and shoes pointed, head round, head round and shoes pointed, till the latter were firmly set.

Before doing this, he had suspended his cloak and

hat each upon its peg on the wall, and after doing this, he reached for them, saying, as he nodded towards the dog, "He must have some; dearie would never like it if he did not. No, she would not eat—she is so fond of him—if she did not think a good breakfast would soon be ready for him," so again he made ready for the greengrocer's.

Mr. Wallace knew that the dog had been busy the day and night before, that he had not the incentive to labor that his master had; that no highly taxed nerve gave him strength artificial and made the calls of hunger almost unnoticed; so, although every moment was an hour to him in his eagerness to solve more from the papers, he could not object to the proposition of Harold to give the dog a more substantial breakfast than a cup of tea. Throwing down to the value of a guinea, he said, "There, good Isaac, is something, and the change for the candles burned out."

"No, Great Heart, no."

"I shall be here to-night, and we will need more candles. Make all the haste possible."

He hurried out. The coals were lighting, the tea was already simmering, Great Heart was waiting, the dog was hungry, so he hurried after he was out; but still, mixing method with time, which owing to the mistake the sun had made, was by no means plenty just then, he laid into the small black sack he carried—it no doubt once belonged to some solicitor who had worn it out, or rather worn it rusty and rumpled, either by carrying much in it for a short time, or nothing in it for a long time, till he was himself much like the sack ready from undue pressure from without or within to fall, to drop, a wreck of what he had once been. And knowing this tender condition of the sack, its present owner never pressed it heavily; he laid into it upon that morning, the candles bought in such an amazing quantity—three dozen—for a Blue Bottler, that the shopman at once sent the boy out to order an immediate supply, having emptied his box with filling Harold's order. He also laid in the sack some rolls, some chops, mutton. These did not tax it, but upon hefting it, he thought the burden sufficient, and so laid some scraps,

good if they were fags, under one arm, and a roll of butter under the other. It might be inferred from this that the green-grocer was not a green-grocer exclusively, but a shopman who absorbed unjustly branches of trade not legitimately his own—the butcher's, the baker's, that of the dealer in milk and the dealer in butter. The meat he bought for Harold alone; and it being the morning of the week upon which the Little Man so satisfied his hunger, the chops were, of course, awaiting the purchaser; the rolls were bought the same way. In milk he dealt, an innovation which was justifiable from the calls of the Blue Bottlers; in butter he had been once known to so let speculative desires carry away his better judgment, as to buy a firkin thereof, but Isaac was its only patron; so the chances were, the weather being warm, and when not warm, foggy, that from its constantly accruing strength, it would soon bear away in triumph the firkin, if not the shop; even the poor souls from the court, who had long been unused to the smell of butter, held their nostrils as they hastened on and out of the shop. The shopman gave it to the scavenger, and if anyone had cared to do so, he might easily have traced its course through the streets of even London. He never bought heavily again—that is, of butter.

Having thus accounted for the facility with which Isaac gathered all he needed, for, if not a breakfast, he determined it should be a lunch for Great Heart upon his return from seeing the blind man—at this thought he endangered the butter under his arm by the convulsions which accompanied the modified "ha, ha!"—we will turn with him into the court, where, as he was about to step up to the door of his dwelling, the wind, which suddenly darted around the corner, caught his cloak, unpinned it at the throat, and threatened to take it along with it or else send it up to an unaccommodating distance from its owner's arms. It was one of those breezes which come from nowhere, are bound for nowhere, and have no particular business to be abroad, for they never blow but once, and so do all possible mischief upon that sole occasion. But did it do the mischief that it intended to do? In reaching for the suddenly rising cloak, Harold lost

hold on the fag-ends of meat that went to make the dog's breakfast, and they fell here and rolled there. He looked at them, and he looked to see if another gust were to follow the last, but seeing all things calm, he laid the black bag down, and was about to follow with the roll of butter, when a pleasant voice cried, "Let me do it, let me do it," and a pair of small, soft hands, well-shapen and well washed—the last he knew quite unheard of for a Blue Bottler in general—began picking up the scraps, while the voice continued, "That was a saucy wind. Never mind, here they are; can I help you any more?" as the fags were piled on the steps.

He knew the voice was too cheery, the hands too small and clean, the step too quick and the heart too willing to belong to the dwellers in the court, who could find nothing there to make cheery tones, fair skin, light foot; for their hearts were weighty, their burdens crushing, else they would not be there. Harold only lived there because he could be in a house entire, so rare a thing found, that he endured much that he would not otherwise have found bearable; another mitigation, he was near the entrance, and so never encountered many of the savors, the gases, the smokes, the thousand and one things that escape from the crowded tenements.

"Thank you, thank you, Miss," returned Isaac, as he looked up from the step on which he had secured his purchases and looked into the pretty face of Meg Hamper. He had seen her at the funeral, and he knew her, but thought it best not to make himself known, so he added after a moment as if in apology for the fags, "These are for the dog."

"And he will be glad of them, I know," she replied, tossing back a few wavy locks that the wind had caught at the same time it did the cloak. "But if I can do you no good, I will hurry on. I am carrying a breakfast to a poor woman, just at the end of the court, and if I find her gone I shall not wonder. How much trouble there is in the world, and trouble of other people's making, too!" The last she seemed saying quite as much to herself as to anyone who might hear.

But not a word escaped the ear of Harold, who re-

plied, "Yes, yes, and it makes so much work to do to undo the trouble; so much to do and so little time to do it."

"There, there," she cried, picking up a small basket she had set in the corner by the step when she began gathering the fags, "that is just it, but I never thought of it before—that is, never thought where the trouble was; it is because the time is gone before one gets all done. Now I will go, or I shall—"

The dog, who had smelled the fallen meat and found the door ajar, bounded out just then, and with a quick joyful bark, as if he had met an old friend, leaped up, lapped her cheek, her hands, and forgot his hunger and the tempting scraps.

"You are a good fellow," said Meg, patting him as soon as he was quiet. "You do not know me, though, do you? Why, see how he lays his head in my hand." She looked up at Harold as if for explanation, thinking he was the master, and looked into the face of a man who had he been standing for a living statue would have borne the laurels; not a muscle moved, the breath was scarcely discernible, so eager was he to catch every tone of her voice, every sound of her foot as it struck the ground, of her hand as it patted the dog. His hand held a water-worn paper, but it was still; the paper might have been held in a hand of stone—not even a tremor.

The eyes—they were looking at her and at another, but where was the other? Back, back in the past.

The dog bounded back to his master for a moment, and this aroused him. "Is it anyone whom I can help, too?" he asked without realizing what he said.

"She calls for help from somebody, but I cannot tell who it is. She has not lived here long; she moved from Wreckers Court, the upper end. There is a poor woman on the floor below this one that I pity still more, for she does not deserve the fate she has met. Her trouble is not of her own making; the other one's is, I fear; but I will not judge too harshly. The best and purest sometimes do what we wonder at," Meg answered so innocently, as if she had known Mr. Wallace all her life. "A Mr. Hansom called once; I wish he would call again on —the best one, I mean."

"I know him," broke in Mr. Wallace eagerly. "I will see him. Do you go often to these poor people?"

"Whenever Mother Martha does not object too strongly. She says I bring their troubles home with me. But who can help it, sir; their burdens—heart-burdens, I call them—are heavy enough without those of the body too. I often ask myself—"

"What I am doing abroad so early?"

Meg's face crimsoned as she turned in surprise and said in a voice of welcome, "Why, good morning, Mr. Thump; I might ask in turn, what you were doing abroad so early!"

"Looking after the afflicted, but I cannot say out of so much real unselfishness as you, although I want to relieve the poor body. How is she?"

"Much the same."

"Mother Susan will watch with her to-night."

"And Mother Martha too," added Meg.

"I will not take you from friends," said Mr. Thump, looking up in a wondering way at the two with whom Meg was conversing, but seeing Harold extended his hand saying,

"I do not know you by name but by deed. You were the bearer of the offering to the unknown dead! I am glad to see you, sir; what may I call you?"

"Isaac Harold," returned the Little Man, giving his hand and bowing low.

The junior member of Trout & Thump saw in the name something to start at, but he also saw the need of at once seeming as if he had not started. He looked up to the face of Wallace, and a half smile of recognition lighted his face, but it faded, and he said, somewhat formally, "I beg pardon, sir; I thought I recognized you."

"And I might say the same to you, Mr. Thump, for having heard of you, I will say I recognize you through the description given me by my friend, John Hansom; he tells me he has given you a client."

Mr. Thump thought it best to be wary just how he replied to this. Here was a stranger who might be a friend as he professed, and he might be an enemy of

John Hansom and his cause, so he replied somewhat stiffly, "I am retained as an adviser to Mr. Hansom, but to no one else."

"I heard from him that you had taken a journey in behalf of the case," continued Mr. Wallace, without noticing the rebuff contained in the young attorney's words and manners, "and as I know him so well, perhaps I might venture to ask if you were successful?"

Although this was not said in a prying way, as if curiosity prompted it, nor in an insolent way, as if it were the defiance of an adversary, and yet that there was a purpose in it, the manner of the speaker showed clearly; but just what it was puzzled Mr. Thump, and not a little annoyed, he answered, turning away, "The confidences of a client are sacred, sir; I will bid you both good morning."

"The breakfast will be stale if we delay any longer," he said, smilingly, to Meg.

"Yes, the poor woman will look for it. The soup I took yesterday tasted so good, she said. But this Mr. Hansom you talk about is the gentleman the woman down stairs wants so much to see; and can't we send him word?" Meg asked, half following Mr. Thump, and half looking toward Mr. Wallace. The latter, with the far-away look gathering in his eyes as she spoke, said, "I will tell him, I will tell him."

"And so will I," added Mr. Thump. "And now I will take the basket, if you do not object to the relief."

Meg handed him the well-filled basket, with a gentle warning not to spill the tea and the gruel, thanked Mr. Wallace, patted the dog, nodded a good-bye to Isaac, and stepped lightly away by the side of Samuel, just as she had done years before, but not with so much freedom, for when they were alone the old reserve returned.

"I am going away, perhaps, Meg," said Mr. Thump abruptly, "and no assurance to take with me?"

The bright red ribbon which held the white fleecy covering of her head, that she called a hood when she began the knitting of it, paled beside the flush that spread over her face; the plaid mantle drawn about her, was clasped and unclasped at the throat, as if now to

make breathing easier, and now to choke down something which was at last put away, for the answer came with a pained look, "When the other assurance comes that you know that I know who I am."

"But if it never comes?" ventured the young man, and the next moment would have recalled the reckless venture.

"Then—then, I must stay with uncle. There is nothing else to do. When are you going?"

Here was a weakening of the opponent's side, which the lawyer quickly saw. She did not say, "Then the assurance will never come," but, "then I must stay with uncle."

Content with this for the present, he said earnestly, "Something, Meg, will yet conquer your foolish pride. I cannot tell when I shall go. I must first see a client—why it is this same Mr. Hansom we were just talking of. It is again upon his affairs that I may be called away."

"And upon his you went before, too?" asked Meg, looking up as she added, "It must be a case of much importance."

"And so it would be to somebody, if she could only be found. There is wealth and station awaiting somebody."

"I am sorry for her if she needs them and never gets them," returned Meg with a deep sigh.

"She will, I am sure, if she is living, but this I sometimes doubt. And here we are, Meg; which floor do you go to first?"

"I have food enough for both, but will go to the poorest and neediest now."

"And to her I shall pay my visit, but if you do not care, I would like to see her alone. I find she needs legal advice. Mother Susan sent me to see what I could do for her. Let her have her breakfast first, and then I will see what can be done for her in her trouble, which she does not seem able to state very clearly."

"She has spells of delirium, and I never mind what she says in them, but I know Miss Thump and Mother Martha do. I hope and pray you may help her, but I feel that she has not always done right. She sometimes

begs me to stand behind her so she cannot see me, for she says she does not want anyone young near her, it reminds her of other days."

If Meg had been less modest, she would have quoted more truly the poor sick creature's words, "Young and pretty, sad and fair."

"She has, in her sane moments, asked for a lawyer, a justice, some one to whom she could relate her story, Mother Susan tells me; but is no one with her?" he asked.

"No; Mother Martha left her an hour ago, and I am to give her her breakfast and remain till she comes back."

"Then I will not go in, for I must have a witness to what she says. No, Meg, no," he added quickly, as he saw she was about to offer, "you see too much now of life's miseries, more than you would if—if I had my way."

Meg blushed; she knew what he came near saying after the first if.

Mr. Thump knew that Meg was to carry the breakfast that morning, and he knew also that there would be no one else with the invalid, for it might be, several hours; so, having played his part very well, there remained nothing for him to do but to carry the basket up the narrow, rickety flight, leave it at the door of the third, rear, and bid Meg good morning, but not good-bye. "I shall see you," he said, "before I go, and may I not tell Mother Susan that you will stay with her again while I am away?"

The chair, the cup, the books, the pictures, all beckoned her to the cottage in Lunley Lane, and the washing—washing that always died away there; but she only said quietly, "She shall not be too much alone."

"That means that you will come, I know. Good morning; I shall tell her," and waving his hand at a remonstrance he saw might be made if he lingered, he picked his way down the third flight.

Meg brushed back the tears that hid the string-bound latch and entered on her errand of mercy to the sorrowing and suffering friend or foe.

Mr. Thump did take another journey to Wenham, but not immediately.

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN WHICH THERE IS FEAR OF FOULNESS AGAIN IN THE GREAT CHIMNEY.

MR. WALLACE watched them; the dog sniffed for the fags; Isaac took up the bag, the butter, the meat, and then watched them too.

"It will do, it will do," said the latter approvingly.

"What will do?" came from Mr. Wallace, mechanically. "Yes, I think it will do; he is not disposed to betray his trust, and I like him for it, and must tell John Hansom.

"And how glad John Hansom will be; I should like to hear you tell him; ha, ha, ha! that's good, very good, but somehow it don't make me feel like straightening, as good things do most always, Great Heart," he lowered his voice, "I feel more like drawing up; but I won't, no I won't. The sun was ahead of time, and I felt spite at him when I opened the door and window to let him in; but after I got out with him, I didn't feel so. He warmed me, and when he came he brightened me, even if the wind did blow me; but now I don't feel so; I feel choked, the air is bad. The Great Chimney is foul again. It snorts and puffs; it can't hold all the wrongs, the black wrongs that are done in it. It groans with them and must throw some off. I never felt it so near before, Great Heart, never. I put the tea on the coals, and I did not put needles in, did I? Let me go in and see. I must not give you the tea I make for *him;* no, no."

He hurried by the master, who followed slowly with the dog at his heels tracking the fags. The fire had not brightened so much as Isaac feared for, so the tea was

not over done. The chops he drew forth and was about to lay them on when Mr. Wallace entered the door.

"Only enough for yourself, good Isaac, I must be to these," said he pointing to the papers.

"But if I wait, will you lunch with me?" asked Isaac stepping back from the fire towards the cupboard.

"Yes, gladly, for I think Jericho is too far away for these stirring days and nights; I may lose if I am too far out."

"Ha, ha! that is it! that is it! Go and see the blind man." Here he rubbed his hands gleefully, nodded his head knowingly. He had laid away the chops, and was about to take out the cups, but finding himself still in cloak and hat he divested of these, hung them up and returned to the cupboard with its cups, saucers, spoons, and bowl of sugar. These he carried to the table and placed beside the small black jug that held the pennyworth of milk with the pennyworth of cream afloat upon it. "Yes, go and see him, and then come to me; come to the chops done to the juice with butter on them, hot butter, that hot platters keep hotter; come to the rolls, brown and tender; come to the tea just on the simmer; come to these and I will wait."

"Yes, Isaac, I will, and by that time I shall feel hunger and its needs. Now a cup and let us to work." As he held out his hand for the tea Harold was pouring, the far away look came again to his eyes, and he reached some distance beyond where he should.

"You are aweary, Great Heart, aweary; drink this, it will rest you." Harold placed the cup by his side while he was still reaching, took his hand and laid it upon the table, poured for himself, drank it off as fast as the heat would permit.

Mr. Wallace brought back again by the dog, who had waited patiently and now began to make himself and his needs known by putting his forepaws on his master's knee, thus bringing his head where he could overlook the table, threw down a bit of paper he had in his pocket, and on it the fags, then began to drink too.

"Too bad, too bad; I am sorry, dearie, that I forgot him," Harold called in an apologetic tone to the bird

who was now upon the perch, evidently in not a very amiable mood, that she should have been so neglected; when all were without, she was within alone. "The fact is, dearie," her master continued advancing to the cage with his cup in one hand and some hempen in the other, "there has been so much to do this morning and so little time to do it, even with the sun so much ahead, that one forgets somethings, and can't help it. He don't mind it, so you needn't."

"Time's up! time's up!" cried the starling, with now the right eye on the hempen, now the left, as she flew to perch in the open doorway.

"Yes, dearie, yes, it now begins to look as if time would be up some day. It looks more like it, I must say, than it ever has before. It looks more as if I might make the tea for *him*. Don't you think so, dearie?"

The bird whistled, cracked the hempen, and called out this time, with her neck stretched so that she could peep over her master's shoulder at Mr. Wallace, "I'm in a hurry! I'm in a hurry!"

"So am I in a hurry, dearie, for it's all to be gathered. The gatherings are hard to find, and when they are found it is hard to know where they fit; don't you think so, Great Heart?"

"Not any that I have found yet, good Isaac. I can place them all, I think. Another cup," and he held forth for a re-filling, "if you please. Who ever made tea like yours!"

"Nobody, nobody," laughed Isaac as he hurried forward, put down his own cup upon the table, creamed, sugared and poured with an eager hand for his guest. "Nobody can make the other kind either, so well as I can—the kind that is full of sharp points that sting while the rest of it scalds, blisters, burns deep, burns lasting."

"That will come in time, and there is not so much to be done first either," Mr. Wallace returned in a reassuring tone. "This tea is neither hot nor cold, but just right, so I shall show you how I can stimulate my nerves; see!" He held the cup to his lips full, he took it away empty.

"One more, Isaac, only one; that will make three. There's luck in threes."

"That's what we want! that's what we want!" cried the Little Man balancing himself on the long points of his shoes. "Luck, luck, luck! I pour you out, I cream you, I sweeten you, I stir you, and Great Heart drinks you," and having done each of these he handed the cup to Mr. Wallace, who said,

"I cannot drink all the luck, you must taste it first," and extended the cup to the Little Man, who nodded, refused, and looked sad. "Yes, you must, Isaac," he urged; "there is happiness for you yet."

"I will taste to please you, but not for luck, not for happiness, that will never come here; but it will come when the sack is so large that it will be an eternity in filling, when the gatherings are so bright and beautiful that the sack will never be heavy and bend the shoulders, when the thought that they are new, not cast-off, that they are to make happy one's own soul, and not be sent to the second-hand shop. *They* tell me this, *they* do. I did not believe *them* at first, but I have so many things to put with what *they* say, that I know it is true. The drawing up, the choking with the foul of this Great Chimney, the wickedness of this Great London, and a something else, Great Heart, I never told before, a looking behind me, a looking behind me, a peeping over the sack as if there was a hand there to strike me—what do you think it means?" While saying this, he turned his head timidly, and a frightened look came in his face, as if the hand were already uplifted.

"It means, good Isaac, that you have lived here too long alone, you and dearie, till you have imagined all this. Now drink to luck, and of luck, and think no more of such things."

Isaac drank, but it choked him; he swallowed, but not easily. Putting down the cup, he shook mournfully his head. "No use, no use," he murmured, "*they* always tell me the truth, and *they* say it must be."

"You will forget this when the way is plainer." Mr. Wallace spoke cheerily, but the sadness of his old friend troubled him. "I will drink; what is luck to me, is luck to you." The third cup was thus emptied by the guest, while the host had but taken half of his first.

The Little Man pulled up the stool, sat down, leaned upon the table, saying, "Let us see if we can make any more straight—the blind man, you know, Great Heart," and a faint smile broke over his face.

"Yes, yes," returned the latter, pulling out his watch, "it is nearing nine, now. We will hope and pray that our task may be light for awhile. That one," pointing to the paper deciphered, "was upon the outside, and I trust is more illegible than the rest will be."

The papers were laid out, one here, one there; two or three which would not separate without the most skilful handling, were put into the unoccupied compartment of a leather case which Mr. Wallace carried about him; the others could not all be examined that morning, so how should he decide upon the one for which he might have time. "Not chance," said he partly to himself and partly to Harold, "not chance, for that has not controlled me, but whatever has, shall lead me to select what will be needful for me to-day," and closing his eyes, he drew out one that was nearly hidden by those upon it, that was of newer, fresher foldings, more delicate tint, where the water had not yellowed it, and sent forth, as it was moved, he and Harold both fancied, a sweet odor. It was not so crisp—not so much endangered by the opening: it was not so water-marked, not so difficult to read. A word here and there, blurred and blistered, which were at such regular intervals, that the Little Man suggested that they showed each heave of the tide, and he might have added, each heave of a heart, so frightened at finding itself out of the pure atmosphere it had always beat in, that it knew no other way than to still itself in the dark muddy waters, perhaps urged into those and over others by one who would save her from a worse fate, for the enemy was on her track, and would have stopped not at any means, so long as she stood between him and what he hoped soon to close hands upon. They read:

"I am alone in London, but why, I cannot tell. I was summoned to meet one for whom I would give my life to relieve. He is not here. I am in a wretched hovel in Poorly's Resort. Danger threatens me. There

is no lawyer, no Henry, nobody but a man who is so cowardly he dare not tell me who he is, nor why he should deceive me, and a woman who is almost mad herself. He gave me a drink, for I was thirsty with pain at heart, whirl at brain, and rage at fate; a drink that has put desperation in my soul. The water is not far off. If I do, if I do—I shudder to write it—may heaven put these papers I shall carry with me, into the hands of some one who will find my home—Wenham—who will relieve friends from anxiety, my name from the dishonor that suspicion might breathe upon it, and bear to Henry when he shall return from the long voyage, the assurance of love undying. The man and the woman have gone out. The water calls me; its sound will guide me; its waves soon wash me up where I shall wait for him—Ha! this is my chance!—my brain, my heart!—I am going, Henry, going!

"MARIA RAY."

The last few lines were hurriedly written, the hand evidently nervous with dread at the thought of what its owner was about to do, and almost delighted, too, at the unexpected opportunity to do it.

Mr. Wallace laid it down, speechless; the drops had gathered upon his forehead while reading; his hands were without tremor, but cold as stone; the blood had forsook them, forsook his cheek, forsook his heart he thought, for it beat feebly, so feebly that he grew for the moment faint, but the next it leaped from wherever it was lurking into his brain, and with it carried a thought that was a suspicion, a fear, a dread, in quick succession. Would he—the man whom Maria had but too truly said, was so cowardly he dare not tell what he would do—would he put aside the only other impediment to possession? The very thought that the labor of his life should be in vain, and another wrong be done, sent the blood whirling anew from heart to brain, from brain to heart.

Grown a little calmer, he began to think, and the thinking brought a sudden decision, and the decision brought acting at once.

"Harold—Isaac, good Isaac," he began abruptly, with

the stern, relentless look upon his face, which we once said was not the look nature had given, but circumstances, surroundings, the work he had to do, the fate he had to endure.

The Little Man, who was less able to cope with what had been divulged—not that he was less quick to perceive, not that he knew less of what it might mean, it must mean—was startled by the words of Great Heart, for the tone of his voice, the depth of earnestness were new. He laid down the paper which he had taken up while Great Heart was silent, and without reply turned his small black eyes, so that, as he looked for what might follow, they glistened, they gleamed, and two tears were soon brushed away by the black silk handkerchief the jockey's coat found place to secrete.

"I am going to tell you something," continued Mr. Wallace, his lips trembling slightly as the tears came down the swarthy cheeks of the Little Man, thus tempering somewhat the sternness of the look. "I meant you should know, but not so soon, not till all was clear and I could surprise you; but now I must tell you. Last summer when the roses were in bud, you took a note to Miss Susan Thump, Lunley Lane—"

"Yes, two."

"Very true, one was of hand, and the other was of pocket, though. The one of hand, my hand, said that flowers were to be purchased for beautifying the grave of the *unknown*—mind, the unknown dead. Now, Isaac, sentiment, romance, will lead one of the gentler sex to such an act, but think you it led me, a man who has lived these years for what I have? Think you it—not the sentiment, but the fact of the unknown, would move me to such? No, Isaac, I knew her. How? The blind man knew her. Did chance lead him to the morgue? No, it was Miss Thump, it was Rover. But who, and what brought Miss Thump to the mendicant? Chance? No, there we must stop, Isaac, till—"

"Till we can find an answer in the gatherings, Great Heart," interrupted the Little Man raising his eyes reverently, and pointing gently upward.

"Right, my good friend, right, and many more things

will be sought for, and I hope, found in these gatherings. One there is you and I will look for first and together."

"Not together, not together, Great Heart," sadly broke in again the Little Man, "for I shall have many of them sorted before you come. I shall have a new sack and be well on my journey and learn the way in the green fields —for I shall not stop in the Great Chimnies; I shall hurry on to where I can smell the mould and see the dew; I shall learn the way among the freshest and greenest and come back to show you to them, Great Heart."

"No, no, Isaac, don't talk so; let me tell you what I was going to say—what we will both look for together—why so many innocent must suffer by the wickedness of others?"

"Wicked folks, Great Heart, are like London, a Great Chimney. They get foul, and they puff, snort, and groan with foulness till they must throw it off; and does the soot care where it falls? Does this Great Chimney care, if, when *it* throws off, the folks that come up from its foulness are good or bad—fall into the water or creep away to die upon the land? No, it must get rid of so much. That is my gathering here, but it may not be like when I travel the other way with a new sack. But you must hurry on to tell me, for the blind man, you know, must be with the Trout at ten.

"I must, so I must. Well, the blind man knew her by—by the everything about her, even the cheek—and the blind man suspected it was the work of *him*."

"Ha! my cushion, my pin, my needles! it chokes me, it draws me up. Let me straighten, then I won't draw up; only once across—I'm in a hurry, in a hurry," and once across he went, pointed shoes, round head, round head, pointed shoes. "Now, go on, go on; I can bear it now. I sent the blood away when I straightened; I took it in time. If too much gets up here," he put his hand upon his head, "I can't straighten. I bring my cushion with me," and he brought it to the table, and himself to the wooden stool.

"So, you know the blind man is shrewd and tells me all he suspects. I saw, as he did, whose work it was, and I have watched, and tracked him to the bar of justice."

"Where I shall pass the tea to him, Great Heart, don't forget that."

"Yes, you may do that. And yet, before I bring him there, I must have him in one more corner—the blackest, the barest, the deepest of all. Harold, good Isaac, draw near and let me tell you what I have told no one but John Hansom. I must tell you, so that you may watch. Never breathe it, till the time is ripe."

"Never, never, not even talk of it to dearie, Great Heart, for fear somebody might gather it."

"Draw nearer; let me whisper it."

The Little Man bent so low, that the long nose neared the table, while the right hand was all the time stabbing the cushion, now with the big pin up to its head, now with the sharp shining needles. The words came fast but low—so low that the writer could not, even for the sake of the deserving reader, listen with him, or ask the narrator to repeat. Whatever it was, brought a sad, pained look first, and then a hopeful joyful one.

"Is all ready—all the gatherings in?" asked Isaac at last in so loud a tone that we may record it.

"Not all—but the fear, Harold, the fear," said Mr. Wallace, looking at him as if for some protection from whatever fear he had.

"I will make no more gatherings in the sack now, Great Heart, they shall be all for here," placing his hand on his head, "and here," laying it on his heart. "*They* tell me that the last will be so heavy that I shall sink."

"Long years yet before you, Isaac. And you will watch?"

"I will, Great Heart, I will. And the papers—the papers of state—what are we to do with them?"

"I shall take these, newly found, to John Hansom for his attorney. Now I will to the blind man. The night's labor has disordered my dress; I will put myself in fitter plight, Isaac."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Little Man with an extra twinkle of the eyes, "certainly, certainly."

And soon after, Mr. Wallace and the dog might have been seen hurrying to the corner of Lunley and the Wilton.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"AND YOURS FOR ME, IS THERE SUCH?"

To turn back to the afternoon when Miss Thump so kindly gave Samuel a chance—and if he did not avail himself of it, she threatened never, never to give him another—we shall be pardoned if we listen and look for ourselves, for in such delicate matters as this chance, these hopes referred to, a third party cannot always trust to the appearance before the public.

Timidity, lest it be known that each is in love with the other; shyness that each has found out the other, and general shakiness of hand, head, and heart, are signs read differently by people. So we will make sure and list.

Meg watched Miss Thump's dumpy little figure down the walk, through the gate, and as far along the Lane as she could see it; she had never before felt so deep an interest, apparently, in the safety of anyone. But the little woman being fairly out of sight, and no one else happening to pass, she was forced to look within—of course, her eyes, fingers, and thoughts at once fell upon the pattern—the wreck—it had, for many rows lost all semblance to the original, which had a sprig in each scallop, with a dot which answered for a berry falling from it; but when she now sought for the sprig it had become a straggling vine, reaching out finger stitches in all directions, as if it sought an imaginary support. She looked at it and laughed, one of those merry laughs she used to send floating out from Snatcher in the olden times, when she thought a pull along shore was happiness enough for a mortal here below.

"What is amusing, Miss Meg?" asked Mr. Thump, admiring the pretty play of mirth, and the attempted suppression of it on her face.

"The pattern, the pattern! I wonder whatever made me knit such scrawls as those," and she held up the web to show the difference between the sprig with its falling berry, and the aimless, hopeless vine. Ah, Meg, Meg, you missed your point then, if you thought to turn a lawyer off the track by your sudden care that he should see the mistakes your skilful fingers had made. Did you suppose he would sit afar-off and compare the pattern and the lack of pattern? It was just the way and the only way to draw him near without seeming to.

If you were skilled in coquetry, we should call it a manœuvre, but you are too innocent, too natural for that; so we say you thought to hold him at a distance, taking it for granted that he who could weave a cause for plaintiff or defendant with but little to guide, would never take thought for the weaving a hood with pattern to tell its ins and outs; and you gave him just the chance he was watching for—to fetch a low stool by your side, and solve with you, not where the berry from the last perfectly knit sprig had fallen, but where your heart had.

"Meg," said he, spreading out the web in her lap—its straggling vine did not provoke laughter, now; she looked at it, and it took upon itself symmetry—"Meg, Mother Susan will not be gone very long, so do not think me abrupt if I tell you something." Upon this the vine to its symmetry added color, life; the sweet sap began to dart in thread-like streams through it, and the buds, buds of hope, the same that Mother Susan longed for, swelled along its stem; she still kept her eyes fixed upon it, dreading, wishing for the opening of the buds.

"You will not think me abrupt?" he asked again. "You know I am going away, and if I had not found you here, I should have made so bold as to seek you before I went. It is nothing sudden, Meg; it is nothing new, my love for you," he held the web so still that the buds burst forth, in their full beauty, into flowers, without a tremor of the vine, without a painful suspense to Meg. "And yours for me, is there such?"

The sap sent itself now in a flood through the vine, and the flowers unfolded into perfection.

"Yes," came so faintly that none but a lover could tell it from "nay." And farther we have no right to list—the time till the maid rang the tea-bell, and just as Miss Hamper plied the knocker was sacred to them.

Meg looked so happy, that Martha kissed her on the cheeks, and shook Mr. Thump's hand warmly. "Very well, Mother Martha, thank you," he replied, giving her as cordial a shake in return, and he was about to add, "very happy, too," but Meg laid her hand upon his arm and whispered, as Miss Hamper turned to speak to the housemaid about the filling of the basket, "Uncle must be the first told, or he would feel hurt;" then she blushed deeply at the thought of what was to be told.

The tea-things had been laid in the room adjoining the little parlor, where Susan had wisely so ordered when she went out, saying to herself, "Just the thing." So when all needed directions had been given, and their performance well under way, Miss Hamper came back to the parlor, and told them what she was to do, and that haste she felt was necessary to give Miss Thump freedom for her own tea and preparations for her son's journey.

"The bell rang as you knocked, Mother Martha." Mother Martha! she thought Mr. Thump had addressed her so before; now she was sure, and in being sure was content—"and we will go out at once."

When they came to the table they found it laid for Miss Thump, her son, and one guest. Seeing this, Martha stepped a little back to see what course things would take; she did not like to deliver Susan's message until she was asked to preside.

"As you are in haste," said the young master of the house, turning to her, "I will ask Meg to turn the tea," and led that lady to the seat of the mistress of the cottage, and almost at the same time conducting Miss Hamper to the place for the visitor.

Meg took the honors modestly, with the pleasantest fancies flitting through her brain; the polished tea-urn reflected her face, her face reflected her heart, and her heart reflected Samuel's. Mother Martha did not see

all these reflections, but she felt them, and doubtless it would be hard to point out a more quietly happy trio than shared the most delightful tea-rolls that were ever put upon any board, buttered with what only the sweetest and purest cream can become; the toast, which was brown and crisp, not burnt and tough; the cold meat, which was tender; the china cup that Meg filled for Samuel, the one she had drank from once, but he did not know it then, seemed lettered with gold unalloyed, not gilt well burned. That gentleman drank to excess of tea; it must have been from the pleasant sensation of passing the cup to the pretty mistress of the urn.

"I never found so fine a flavor in tea before," he said emptying it for the third time. "It must be because I am going on a journey and am wisely laying up a store of stimulant for future drawing upon. It surely can be for no other reason," he added with a smile towards Meg, who blushingly replied,

"I have heard, I think, that you were fond of tea," as she turned from the urn again. She knew she had heard no such thing, and perhaps the thought of this stretching of the imagination added to the blush. "Mother Martha, your cup is in need of more."

"Yes, child dear, I will take another," and while this was being prepared, Mr. Thump and Miss Hamper began talking over the possibilities and probabilities of securing work for Charley, as she had between the bites of roll and butter, meat and toast, told him something of the need and apparent worthiness of the little family at the Resort. Before they arose from the table, the tiniest shadow had crept over Meg's face, she tried to laugh it down when Samuel said something funny, but it would creep on again.

When the meal had been completed with a second course—of cake and sweetmeats—they arose, and the basket having been properly furnished by the housemaid, Miss Hamper made haste to be off with it, and Mr. Thump made like haste, as if he expected, and fully intended to be off with them both, and thus render an escort for Mother Susan on her return, for it was now lamplight; but for some reason this was most obstinately

opposed by Miss Hamper, who declared the maid was the proper one, and only one, for she might be needed to help. This last argument was effective, decisive.

When alone, Meg, looking up from the books she was absently turning over, by the table in the little parlor, which was made warmer, cozier, rosier than ever by the mellowed light from a pretty astral lamp, "Samuel, I must tell you before you go what I should have said a few hours ago, but the spell was so sweet I dared not break it."

"Pray, what can it be, my little Meg?" returned Samuel in light tones as if he thought the matter trivial; but when he looked at her a shadow fell also upon him, for he saw how earnest she was.

"*It* can never be," she said sadly, "till I know, till you know who I am."

"If that is all," he laughed in a relieved tone—"if that is all that annoys you I can soon nonsuit you, Meg, for do you know who I am? Do I know who I am?"

"But you are a man," argued the girl, with the shadow lifted not a whit, "and no one asks that. I am, I shall be a woman soon, and if *it* should be they will ask—your friends, I mean, not mine—will ask, 'who was she?' you must be able to tell them, if there is no stain upon my name; and if there is you shall never tell them, for they shall never ask.—It shall never be."

Mr. Thump saw at once it was a matter of conscience, and said softly, "Do not let this trouble you, my little girl; it will be all made right some day, I know. Remember, I am the saved from fire and you from water, neither can boast of the other," he said in a cheering way, but added gravely the next moment, "Boy or girl, man or woman, known or unknown, the question should never be who *was*, but who *is*. It might be, Meg, if we knew our ancestors, we should find they had been more noble in birth than in deed."

Meg gave him her hand in gratitude for the consolation, and it may be he took more—we do not know, for just then the gate clicked, and Miss Thump with the maid and the emptied basket came quickly up the walk; but we do know that her pride was none the less stead-

fast, and her determination unshaken, yet her hopes were brightened.

Miss Thump was in a measure prepared for the proof that Samuel had taken the chance by Miss Hamper when she told her that he put Meg himself in the seat for turning tea, "and he called me Mother Martha." Then she nodded, Susan nodded, and thus they settled the matter without further comment, but the latter doubtless was more from lack of time and proper place than desire.

Mother Susan's supper was kept heating for her; tea was turned again by Meg at her request, and she, before receiving due notice of what might take place, began to count the weeks that must needs go by before they should sit there as one family, before the Daily Bee would publish and the family bible record.

The portmanteau was packed, the basket re-filled, and it with divers bundles were sent by the housemaid again to Poorly's. Susan had resumed her sewing in the parlor, but Meg not her knitting, that, with the needles, the balls, the straggling vine here, and the sprig there, were laid away and the stitches never knit off, for in all the long years that followed Samuel's love never changed.

Nine o'clock came; nine and a quarter, nine and a half. Swiftly these quarters sped. At nine and one more quarter Samuel said, "It will soon be time for me to go. I will take a fly to the Cross Bow, for I cannot be hurried in saying good-bye."

The extra wrapping was thrown over the chair, the portmanteau was set near the street door, the lunch-basket filled and put upon the mantel, while "a few bites," Miss Thump said, were set out for the traveller.

Meg's heart was so full that her eyes now and then were the same, and she began to feel a little sorry that she had not kept the proviso to herself until his return. Ten o'clock came, and taking up the extra coat to see if this pocket held a pair of gloves, and that a clean handkerchief, after which he began putting it on with the help of Mother Susan upon the one hand and Meg upon the other. He said, "I do not know exactly how long I shall be gone, but shall feel so glad to know that you will not

be alone, mother, for Miss Hamper tells me Meg can, and needs to stay—and I hope when I take my next journey, if I must take one alone, that she will find there is really no other place for her to stay, and that this is her home. What say you, Mother Susan, to a daughter even better fitted for your love and to love you than a son?" and he put his arm about Meg and drew her tenderly to his side.

She hid her face and shook her head a little, which made him say, "She has a foolish notion which I shall trust to you while I am gone to quiet forever."

Miss Thump not being taken by surprise—she seldom was—brushed back the tears, swallowed the lump in her throat, put Meg's hand in Samuel's, laid them both between her own and said,

"Samuel you always know what to do, and when to do it; a daughter I need, a wife you need, and Meg is the only one who can be both."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE WILY TROUT AGAIN TOYS.

THUS matters stood with them, when after his return he asked for the assurance from her in Blue Bottle Court. He knew she was to carry the breakfast that morning, and he knew it was no time for him to call as adviser to a sick woman. He stopped at the cottage on his way back, and then feeling little like going to business early, he walked for a few blocks, and as he came again near the Wilton he saw the blind man and his dog just taking position. He had been back nearly two weeks, and yet, although he had sent to John Hansom by the sightless mendicant, word always came that he would call soon, that pressing matters needed his attention elsewhere. He thought he would try once more, and so saluted the man with, "Good morning, sir."

"Good morning, ah! good morning, good morning!"

was the return. "Glad to see you Mr. Thump, for I am at last the bearer of the tidings you so long have looked for."

"Indeed, but how do you know, friend, that I am Mr. Thump?"

"How do I know? I cannot see? I cannot say I feel, so I will say it is given to me who you are by the step, the swing of the foot on the curb. I always wait till a man strikes the curb before I am sure of him. If he is an honest man he puts his foot up fairly, freely, and brings it down squarely. If he is such, I call him Mr. Thump. If he picks his way as if his boots were shiny, or his low shoes were nicely tied; if he puffs a little after he has put his feet daintily, craftily on the curb, then I say that must be Mr. Trout; if he slinks, slips, sidles, slurs, and feels more at home in the mire of the street than the cleanliness of the curb, I say that must be a man called Marplot; and if he chops with his feet and stumps with his cane, and hums cheerful tunes to Owlie, to keep the bird's spirits up and the eyes bright, I say that must be clever, keen, good-hearted John Hansom, who says, sir, that he will see you soon, if not this afternoon, then say to-morrow sure."

"Very good, I shall only be too glad to see Mr. Hansom. But, my friend, do you know all these you have mentioned?"

"As proof that I am not deceiving you, there is Mr. Trout now crossing the Wilton and the next lane above —Angleby, I think they call it. Hear him pick his way, hear him steal on the curb, fox-like without his cunning; cat-like without her craft. I am to meet him at his office at ten o'clock, and if you can just as conveniently be away it would suit us better. I can coax out his claws sooner and clearer, not to harm me, but to see how sharp they are, and who he means to pounce upon. I do not stand here for nothing. I am in the service of John Hansom. Please drop a coin and pass on. I shall not go to his room until I hear you go by again."

Mr. Thump was puzzled sorely. He turned to look in the direction of Angleby crossing, and saw, sure enough, the bland face of his partner bending over, not

an imaginary bit of dust, but a veritable speck of mud that had been so audacious as to alight upon the lustrous broadcloth, and thus cause much annoyance to the wily Trout, who pinched it between thumb and forefinger, crushed it to atoms, wiped the place that had recently known it, first with the side of his hand and then brushed it with his spotless handkerchief, dexterously manipulated by doubling together two of its diagonal corners, while the other two were left free to do the whisking away of the stain, which none but the twinkling eyes of the Trout could see. If he had only been so nice in discriminating a bespattered conscience, and as eager to cleanse it, how much more laudable the exertion. Not that we would make light of neatness of dress, but that we would say he who has time to so scrupulously guard the outward, could now and then look within for the sake of diversion, if nothing more.

But this was the lawyer's great failing; he stooped and stopped for specks and let the weighty slip him.

He should have had his client under training long before, even upon her first arrival; he should have claimed by papers found, and what not found he should have made, just as craft and cunning had whispered to him when he stood within the vaults of the municipality and examined, searched, made notes of the yellow, tender, and musty, and copy of one. But although he listened to them for a time, and they felt sure their advice was heeded, and about to be acted upon, lo! he was suddenly off for an imaginary bit of dust, or a veritable speck of mud that he thought seemed to shadow something, he knew not exactly what. He had now more cases since his young clerk had become his partner, although his standing for shrewdness combined with honesty was good before—have we not long since recorded him as the honest and well reputed? His partner always struck out for the main thing in a case which was either to be laid low or well established. In the pursuit, he never heeded the bits, the specks, or the bubbles; he left the first two to rub off in the conflict, and the last to burst when they were ready. To his advice the senior member often, and more often than he would acknowledge,

trusted. Could he have shown a clear claim for his client he would have invoked his aid and played his own game with Marplot, but he saw at a glance, when he first began to look into it, that there was too much to be supposed, and supposed without ground, for this partner's co-operation.

"Mother Susan," he always said to himself, "played the deuce with him. Folks can be *called* honest and live, but they can't *be* honest and live, and he will find that out in spite of her say so." And whenever he said that, he smiled one of his bland smiles that meant something—they did not all—and would rub together the palms of his soft white hands, as if to say, "I shall show her some day."

So upon this particular morning, when he was bending over the specks of mud, Mr. Thump was betaking himself so far away from the blind man, that it could never be suspected that they had exchanged words. He passed on to his office, and received from the clerk the morning's letters. Finding nothing of importance, he made up his mind to give the mendicant the chance of of an interview, untrammelled by nearness to him; so, strolling up and down the outer room, still keeping on his extra wrapping, and half drawing on and wholly pulling off his gloves while he waited, he soon heard the same soft dainty tread that had so easily carried its owner over the crossing and up on the curb of Angleby. As soon after the first ascension of this tread as was consistent with the inclination toward portliness in form, and consequent curtailing of breath, the small white hand of the senior member was laid upon the latch, the door was opened, and a bland "Good morning, Mr. Thump," greeted that gentleman, while a look of entire satisfaction overspread his face as he added, after glancing at the retained outer coat, and the still suggestive actions of the gloves, "business calls you away early, I suppose?"

"Yes," returned the junior member after greeting Mr. Trout with the day's compliments. "Yes, I am going to be absent for a while, but I cannot call it business;" this he said intending to allay any suspicion that

might arise if he had been seen conversing with the blind mendicant. "There is nothing pressing this morning; the case of Featherstone has been put over, and unless you bring something I shall feel at liberty to leave the callers who may happen in, in your skilful hands for an hour or two, while I recruit and refresh a little in this clear fresh air. It is rarely such a bracing morning as this dawns upon our murky town, and close keeping within doors, since my return, brings a heavy brain and tired hand, I find."

"Sorry to hear that, Mr. Thump, for the fact is, I begin to feel so myself, but mine comes from the labor of years, and pours from the sudden change; so, go, go and take a long walk, it will do you good, the best and only thing that I see you can do—in fact there is nothing better, actually it is the precise thing to do," and while saying this he drew out his watch twice, and looked toward the door twice that number of times, for he thought he heard once a scratching on the casement, once a "quiet, sir," once a cane out on a sliding scout for obstructions, once a rap; amid these imaginary symptoms of the approach of the blind man, he forgot, of course, the hour of day, so, consulting his timepiece for the third time, he exclaimed, "Bless me, I did not know it was ten and ten minutes after. I agreed to look up a point of law for Featherstone's friend—a mere friendly accommodation—and send him word by ten," all of which Mr. Thump knew to be false, and but an excuse for hurrying him off, for he had noted the glances cast toward the door upon the least noise from without.

"I am getting forgetful, and sometimes think it would be better if I stepped out and left only my name, which would yield me a little income; but we will talk of that by and by. I must look up for Featherstone's friend," and passed into his own private office, whose window overlooked the corner of the Wilton and Lunley, where the blind man still stood with hat extended. Thus relieved, he took more time to unhat and uncloak himself, while the little mahogany wardrobe was unlocked less nervously, and upon two of its three inviting pegs were hung the hat and the cloak. From a small drawer

were taken a hand-mirror, a brush for the ring of wiry hair, a silk pad for rubbing the crown which had no hair, a pair of low shoes with smooth broad tie-strings from a shelf below the drawer, these were exchanged for the highly polished boots, and displayed again the silken hose well drawn, and kept so by an invisible holder. Having used the mirror, the brush, the pad, and replaced them, he closed the door of the wardrobe and seated himself in the revolving chair, which was not so loftily threaded as it had been the day before when Mr. Wallace had advised with him ; so he sat down with even more comfortable resting of the low shoes upon the floor.

"To-night," said he, blandly, "Barley ought to be back. I shall then know what has been found. I shall then—yes, think I will ; under any circumstances it is, it must be more satisfactory than to live alone—and I see so many indications that my visits are looked for, that I am growing indispensable to her happiness. I cannot now withdraw my attentions without greatly dishonoring myself and leaving her heart-broken. If she does not get the Ray estate, she must the Ivandale; then if this blind man has any claim upon anything or anybody that I can get into my hands, and I leave this professional business, which is daily growing under my sagacious management, to Thump, give him my name with a per cent. of the income for its use, I really cannot see why I am not well established for life."

Again the soft palms were rubbed and the nails were paired with such merry little cuts that the taper ends were much in danger of sundry scratches. "I have called often of late, yes, very often, so often as to make it a matter of jest between the little devil who answers the door and anyone about. Now I really cannot feel that I am doing the right thing to subject her to the ridicule she surely will meet if I should not—yes, yes, I will see what news Barley brings, and then carry out my plan—my plans, I mean," and he drew from his pocket the copy, exact, he had made of the one yellow, tender, and musty ; but he hastily returned it, as he heard voices outside interluded with short barks and curious sniffs—that is, sniffs of curiosity. Soon after the clerk tapped,

Mr. Trout bade "come in," the door opened, and the blind man following so closely behind the clerk that he saved that functionary the trouble of announcing him, felt his way in, while Rover who had freed his string from his master's hand, was in advance of all and intent upon continuing his investigations at the end of his nose. The clerk was about to say something, when Mr. Trout arose quickly and came forward to lead the visitor to the same leather-covered chair that Mr. Wallace had occupied the day previous ; so the boy could do nothing but take a backward movement out of the room, and close the door. With a few uncertain steps and a few scouting slides of the cane, with one hand upon the arm of the chair and the other still supported by the staff, the man, with careful, cautious sinkings of the body, as if he were not sure, and of course he was not, of the exact location of the chair-bottom, he was at last seated. Mr. Trout returned to the revolving chair.

"I am a little late," began the visitor, "for I waited to see if he would not go out, "and pointed in the direction of the outer room. "I felt he would, and knew it would be better."

"Whom do you mean, friend, my partner?" asked Trout, glad to see the poor fellow display so much shrewd forethought. He could always see this quickly in others.

"Yes, I mean him. You see, I know partners in name are not always partners in deed. If you can help me, and trust for your fee in the future, I know you think it ain't worth while for two to trust," the man looked as if he was innocent of trickery, but his words belied him. This again called forth the unexpressed admiration of the honest and well-reputed lawyer.

"True, that is true," said he, "but as our practice is extensive, it is quite unnecessary that minor matters should need mutual attention," and he stroked the lustrous broadcloth over the right knee with an air of satisfaction, while he smiled blandly upon the blind man, upon the strokes; the air and the smile were supposed to be wasted, as they were only such as could be seen.

"And it may be," was the reply with the same pas-

sive look, but significant words, "it may be that the matters we will talk about are not so minor as some other things."

"Ah, indeed, you quite excite my curiosity. I saw long ago that you were a man of not the ordinary make of beggar."

A shadow now passed over the sightless face and the pained look that followed it was not lost upon the twinkling eyes that watched him as he replied,

"I am a wronged man, a deeply wronged man, and one whom no one yet has righted. Why? Because I dare not trust my case to anyone's hands, lest I might be wronged again. I stand at the corner—Rover, good fellow, and I—and seek alms, of which, as I told you before, I have enough, or shall have enough to leave for his care when I am gone. My joints are not so limber as they once were, my step not so sure, but when I cannot stand I shall sit—that is, if I am not righted before, and I shall die at my post. I shall never give up what I have undertaken," and he spoke with an earnestness that made the lawyer forget his right knee, while the smile faded, and the air from one of satisfaction became one of curiosity mingled with a little fear—the latter came when craft whispered, "Look out," and cunning added, "See that he finds out nothing that you are doing. It may be a trap."

And so, thinking to be cautious, he said, "If you will tell me, friend, who has wronged you, and what you have undertaken, I will see what can be done. I make no charge, mind, I serve with the same zeal the poor or the rich, I told you." There was a hope that the dog's legacy was greater than the master would admit.

"Well, you promise, Mr. Lawyer, but will you perform, when I tell you that my enemy—the one who has basely cheated me out of my rights, is a client of yours? How can you reconcile that? Pray, how can you?"

The blind man bent forward eagerly, and Mr. Trout fancied he could almost see a pair of keen eyes peering through the deeply colored glasses. He moved uneasily under the fancy, and had he listened to craft would have refused further audience with one who was about to

tempt him to break faith with a client; but here he was again looking after a bit, or a speck, or a bubble, and just as he had obeyed the first admonition of craft and cunning, turned away and did as he pleased, and after a moment's pretending thought said,

"It may not affect the case my client has now in my hands."

"Yes, it does," interrupted the man; "it affects him in any case, because I am bound to see him served up by justice, if there is such a thing to be found in England. He is at his old tricks, and I know it, but, of course, you do not know it." As he stopped then, to take breath, for the words had come rapidly and excitedly, his lips curved in a sarcastic turn, something that, for once, escaped the twinkling eyes; so with the curve still there he continued, "Of course, you do not know it; so it may be I am doing you justice as well as trying to get it for myself, if I tell you who it is; shall I? shall I?"

"Yes," was all the astonished lawyer had a chance to say when his sightless visitor leaned forward and whispered, "Dan Marplot!" in a hissing way, that told of the sting that had not lost its hurt.

Here craft and cunning did each its best to be heard, but the one whom they served, listened not, and in amazement answered, "Is it possible?" Craft and cunning were not so much put to rout by this reply as they expected, for they saw they themselves could not have suggested a better; but they trembled for the next, and again began expostulations with their master for the headlong race they saw he was about to run.

"It is possible, and it is probable, and I really do not see that a man like him need to make a lawyer wonder at anything he might do," the blind man continued, sinking back in his chair and stroking a very large beard in a very careful way—a very brown beard, of which it may be we have neglected to speak; it seemed to be his pride, for he was often to be seen to smooth it and apparently adjust it, that is, it would be called adjusting if—it had been false.

"To tell the truth," began Trout in an apologetic manner for what might be to the man a lack in him of

discernment of his client's true character, "I have not the most entire faith in his integrity, but this for which he has engaged me, is the recovery of property." Craft and cunning disgusted at the utter neglect of themselves, went over to the enemy, and so assisted the blind man that he knew far more when he left than he had hoped to learn when he came in.

"The recovery of property! the recovery of property!" mused the man, drumming on the arm of the leather-covered chair, and rubbing his foot against the dog, who had long been through with his investigations nasal, and had lain down at his master's feet without indicating whether he was satisfied or not. "H'm! h'm! I know him so well, I know him so well, h'm! Has any one been sacrificed to recover that property?" and again the lawyer thought he saw a pair of eyes, not sightless, sharply fixed upon him.

"I hope not, I trust not; to that I surely should not lend a helping hand," came from Mr. Trout in such an honest disbelief of such a thing being possible that the man murmured to himself, "Very good, it is as I thought."

"But what you hope and trust, has no effect on the truth. Somebody who stood in his way was sacrificed long ago, and somebody will be again. Mark me, will be if you or somebody else does not look out for her. I know him so well, you see. He wronged me, and I am not wronging him in revenge, but telling what is true."

Here might be a chance to get Marplot completely out of his way, so Mr. Trout, with craft and cunning deriding him, caught the bait, and asked,

"Who is in danger from him now? Who has been in his way?"

"Margaret Ray, to your first question," said the man, "and her mother, to your second."

"Why, she is my client, too," returned the attorney, so puzzled at the turn of things, and so left to himself, that he kept on his race.

"I wish she could be something else," sighed the visitor. "I do not like to know of her being so alone and unprotected as I hear she is from Mr. Wallace. She

stands between him and the Ray estate. Do you think a faithful lawyer attending to his interests outside, can protect her in a lodging-house at all hours? She is in danger. I know him so well, I know him so well. But tell me, if you can, if you may without breach of faith, why both estates are not claimed for her at once, even long ago? I will help, if I can, I will even sacrifice a little, if I can help defeat him—the vagabond! Should I be at the corner of Lunley and the Wilton, asking and begging, if it were not for him? But what he has taken from me, from my life, may not, cannot be brought back, so I will pursue him, even to the spending of Rover's legacy, if needs be."

"That," broke in Mr. Trout, "would be unnecessary. I shall not require fee, for we will hope to recover enough for all"—still looking for a speck, an illusive one, too—this legacy.

"But tell me," cried the man eagerly, "tell me why you do not lay your claims at once, and not give him the chance to do harm; for mark me, if he does do it, it will be so sly that you cannot tell how or when he does it. I know him so well."

"Let me tell you, friend, since you seem to know so much of this affair, there is proof lacking, one link—the proof of marriage of her father and mother. The mother was lost, took the record of her marriage with her, and what a pity she had not been thoughtful enough to secure it for her child; the church which held the records of the village births, deaths, and marriages, was unfortunately burned, and they were lost. No one can be found who witnessed the marriage, for there were, I believe, few guests. I have hopes, however, as I have sent a man for further search, that something may come to light soon. Think of the pity, sir, only one little paper lacking. I sometimes think it would not be wrong to keep it from dishonest hands. I sometimes think it would not be wrong to—to—" the hand began a vigorous smoothing of the knee, with an occasional hitch to seek for the bit of dust, for the lawyer grew somewhat embarrassed at the prospect of putting in words what he thought it would not be wrong to do.

"To just see what could be done to make such a paper," suggested the blind man so coolly that the lawyer was disarmed of all suspicion of danger from this revealing.

"Exactly, exactly it," Mr. Trout replied, glad evidently that somebody else had said it for him.

"Just what I should think you would do," returned the visitor in the same unmoved manner. "The end, you might say, justifies the means."

"So it does, so it does; it is a pleasure, a great pleasure to know that another can so see it."

"I think Mr. Wallace would be of my opinion, too," and the blind man, as he said this, smiled faintly, or else a ray of the bright morning sun fell across his face; at all events, there was a lighting of the features that expressed either the inward satisfaction of the man or the outward approval of the sun at what was transpiring in the private room of the honest and well-reputed, to whom it began dimly to occur, after he had sat some moments smoothing the already smooth and exact tie-strings, for he had endeavored to make himself careless and at ease after the blind man had brought his long pondered project to light, and so had suddenly withdrawn pursuit of the imaginary bit, and made an acute triangle of the upper part of the right leg with the entire part of the left bent at the knee, so without effort he could smooth the string's loops; and while so doing, we say, it began dimly to occur to him that he had been quite too voluble with this stranger—a beggar at that—and it was better now the tables should be turned, that he might find out what more he knew, and how he knew about this case, these clients; so, making no direct reply to the man's last remark, he said,

"Mr. Wallace knew my fair client, and seems, like you, much interested in her, and feels that right should prevail; and yet he has not, like you, a revenge to satisfy, has he?"

"No, no; he tells you the truth when he says he bears no malice to any one; he only asks for justice, and with justice to the lawful comer justice to the unlawful also."

"Ah! how well I know that Marplot." The blind man said the last more to himself, apparently; it was but one spring of the trap.

"Mr. Wallace does not seem to know him of late years," said the lawyer, in a leading manner, but you do, I see, and almost fear him too, eh? "That I cannot say I do, for I have him so in my power."

"Indeed, indeed, do not be too sure of that; he is a slippery cur, so wet always with the oozings which he is forever wiping off, that you may think you have him secure—when he is gone."

"True, with some," laughed the lawyer blandly, as he replied, "but I flatter, indeed I assure myself that I have a sure thing of it if he begins to squirm."

"I should like to feel assured that such is the case—but he is your client; you are engaged to further his interests."

"Ah, ah! no, only so far as this: he claims that the Margaret Ray is an illegitimate child of Richard Ray, and in that case, he becomes heir to the estate; so it is only on that point that I am looking out for him. If it be so, then she can take Ivandale alone. But, you see, when I come to look closely, I feel sure that even both are legally hers, and so I tell Marplot—I am frank with him, perfectly so—I tell him his claim is lawfully preceded; yet he will retain me in spite of what I tell him, and says if I take the Ray estate, provided, of course, the marriage record be found, he will contest it, for he, knows Richard Ray could not legally call Mary Seebold his wife. That is the way we stand; it looks odd to be called lawyer for both, but he is satisfied perfectly, sir, and I am led to do this for the sake of fair play. I am holding him at bay till I can gain ample evidence that she inherits both. He thinks I am waiting for official proof of Colonel Ray's death; but ah! sir, I had that long ago. I want the marriage contract; then both goodly estates are hers."

Ah, Trout, how fair your story! how bland your smile! how truthful your air! how free your tongue to tell an almost stranger the points you were struggling with! but did he believe you? A sorry moment for you when craft and cunning, who had so long been your faithful attendants, had won for you in times past, the title of an honest and well-reputed lawyer; had taught you to smile

with meaning and without ; had kept your lips so closed that a client could scarce get hold of your plan of defence or of attack, and thus given you the reputation for shrewdness ; had put questions upon your lips so rapidly, so sharply, that the testifiers of your opponent writhed under your plying, and burned under your sarcasm. A sorry moment for you, we say, when you drove them away, for now you have become dishonest openly, not covertly, as when under their tuition, for you talk freely ; glibly rolls from your tongue the secrets of your clients ; you smile, but it serves no purpose as it once did ; you require but little moulding from a skilful enemy, and you run on till something stops you. Why is this, oh, wily Trout ? You are not old, you have not lost yet the wits of hale, hearty manhood. We grant your heart is gone, but your sense, where is that ? You gossip, not gather ; you let out, not take in.

It is a wise proposition, on your part, to leave your name and fame with Mr. Thump, and take yourself away, if this be the manner in which you are to maintain your standing among your fellow attorneys, and the world at large. You have been trusted with weighty matters, gained many, lost few ; you have plead for clients far abroad, and near at home ; you might be to-day a barrister ; but you have looked forward to these very estates as a source of greater value, with less labor of brain, and more rest for your soft white palms. Why, again we ask is it, that you are toppling, weakening ?

Because, we answer, you cannot help yourself ; you are made to open your lips ; you are made to move them ; you are made to drive from you craft and cunning, who may return to you hereafter ; your means of making your bread will not be wholly taken from you ; you are made to play weak traitor, smiling simpleton, for right will assert herself ; slumber she may beneath turbid waters, rest she may where the sun shines hottest and the flowers bloom richest, but rise she must and has ; hand in hand with justice she has come, and together they made you what you are, a tool in their hands.

" I have searched," continued he, " amid documents placed here by the last Radnor, previous to one of his

strange journeys. I have found contracts, but not the one I seek."

"But it might aid you in what we proposed," interrupted the blind man with the same coolness of manner at the mention of the project.

"Ah, so it might, indeed so it might. How shrewd you are for a man without sight. I do indeed think you would prove a benefit to the profession—Ah, ah, so it might!"

Let us look at the copy of the one yellow, tender, and musty, and see if this never occurred to you before, Mr. Lawyer. Here the fingers began uneasily and itchingly to make in the direction of the pocket where the copy had been hidden when the voices were heard without.

"Of the death of the Lord of Ivandale?" queried the blind man."

"There is no doubt of it, none at all," quickly returned the lawyer, as his face brightened; it might be that he thought this also could be proved as well as the marriage. "But there does not seem the necessary haste for this claim being put forward that there is for that of the Ray estate. The crown can seize it, too, but let the crown first show his death. Ah! there is where I have the crown, you see," rubbing his palms in content.

"I might, perhaps, in my way, help you in getting proof of it. I catch much gossip in my line. I could go to Wenham; I used to live there. I there first knew my good friend Mr. Wallace; years ago our acquaintance began, and he has served me many a good turn. If he had his way, I should not be at the corner of Lunley and the Wilton; but I cannot be dependent, and I listen, listen for him, for Dan—for Dan Marplot," the blind man hissed in the attorney's face, while his own grew purple, "and I follow him—yes, follow him, and I know more of him than he thinks. He lives in Poorly's Resort. Rover knows the place. I am not afraid to go there; my dog protects me. If Mr. Wallace knew him as well as I, he would not speak of him so coolly," the words came so thickly that they tripped each other.

"But he does say he is sly, and—" said Mr. Trout,

who was interrupted by the blind man, as he flew into a still greater rage, crying,

"Sly, sly! what of that? Many a man is sly, but if you knew him as I know him, you could never find words to tell what he is. Better say what he is not. Sly, sly! call him that if you choose, and nothing else, and see where your client will be some day when you go to find her. She is alone, innocent, unsuspecting—Sly, sly!" he began in another paroxysm. "If I am gone from the corner, you will know, I seek for proof. I will see him in the hands of justice. He shall not have a shilling of old Major Ray's —Sly, sly! Rover! come, come, lead me out, I am choking. I want air; lead me out, lead me out. Sly, sly!" and before Mr. Trout could intercept him, he was hurrying through the outer room and down the public stairway, where he did not like to follow, as the man might be careless of his speech in such an angry mood. The dog hastened after his master, with leading-string dangling, which was not taken till they both gained the street, where the man at once grew calm, and smiled as he patted Rover, murmuring, "We did that well, sir, very well. This is the best bait we ever floated for the Trout, and the best bite he ever gave it. We had to hurry out. If he had asked me for my claim upon something or somebody, could we have told him? Could he get back our treasures, Rover? We will see; he will see. We did that very well." And he hurried on out of the Lane, and on towards Jericho, but whether he reached there it matters not.

Mr. Trout was left with the door of his private office in his hand, and the vague idea in his brain that the blind man had gone without leaving him a claim upon anything or anybody, or even telling him he had one; so he turned back to the revolving chair, and drawing from his pocket the copy of the one yellow, tender, and musty, said to himself, "He has a bad temper, that fellow, yet he looks mild enough at the corner; but I will see him again and get his claim before he has a chance to get mad. I think I have, just at present, all I can look after, and that will come in well when a few odd pounds are needed. I'll have that, and all the rest. I see my

way so clear now. This is well done. Ah! who can do like the Trout, as they call me sometimes?"

While completing this soliloquy, he had touched a spring under the table, before which the revolving chair turned, and obeying the touch, sprang to light a drawer, in which lay a paper, tender, yellow, but not musty—time, and not Trout could make it that.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A PROFITABLE "WENTURE."

MR. JOHN HANSOM left the clerk unaroused, undisturbed, with quill tipped up from the paper, head upon hands and eyelids sealed—so softly did the ebony cane meet the ground; so quietly did his feet seek their way out. He thus spoke to Owlie when they stood in the Lane looking up and looking down, and much hesitating which way to go: "Owlie, you are always wise; now glitter, glisten, and burn if we shall go and see the woman who has the drowsy son. Let me see you, let me hold you up where the best light will strike you. Ah, how bright you are! That will do. I find you know, Owlie, always know what to do. Let me see—Blue Bottle Court. Do we know where Blue Bottle is? Ha, ha! if some other people knew as much as we know, Owlie, how wise they would be. We go along this lane, do we not, Owlie!" and stump, stump, stump went the man, the cane, and the bird of gold perched upon the cane, till the three had reached the Wilton.

"We do not see the blind man, do we, Owlie? How Harold would laugh to see us look for him. It makes you pretty, too, and bright; it makes your eyes sparkle. I like to see you look for him, you have heard so much about him, and never saw him, did you? Well, you shall, you shall; just give me time. Now, we go down the Wilton past Cheatem Street. Miss Polly Barley

lives there. You have heard of all these folks, Owlie, but you have never had a chance to see where they are to be found; you so seldom get out, but the time is coming, I think, when you need not glitter, glisten, and burn so much in the dark, and by yourself. You will get out more soon among folks and be admired as you used to be. Here we are at Cross-Cut Lane; the Boggs' live there. Harold sells his gatherings there. He, he! here, pretty bird, here is Chapel Street, where *she* lives, Margaret Ray. Did we tell Mr. Thump, our adviser—we have an adviser now, in this matter, remember, Owlie—did we tell him of *her?* No, we let him find out himself. That is what we fee'd him for, to find out for us. Let us stop a minute, Owlie; I feel as if I were young again, I certainly do, and I do not just see why I should, do you? Do you see anything with your sharp eyes? Ha! there it is, there is a reason for all things if we wait long enough. It is a bright face, a pretty face that has just turned the corner, and is coming to meet us; it is hopeful, too, and I am so glad it is. Look, Owlie, look your best, now, and your keenest. See the cherry knot, just the color, and the little bag over her arm—how many times I've carried it; no, not the bag, it was a basket then, but it had cherry knots on it somewhere—bows, maybe they call them—it had flowers, grasses, pebbles, anything that was pretty. I have known it to hold a little sick or lame bird, all wrapped in soft moss, and we have carried it between us till we reached her home, and then—well, never mind. Has it gone by us, Owlie, this face, these cherry ribbons? Yes, it has. I did not look at it, but I felt a wind, a fragrant wind, such as used to blow over green fields, and I knew it must be she was passing. Now, Owlie, we will go on; it may be I shall bear hard upon you now, for I feel weak, weary, maybe. I do sometimes, you know. We will turn the corner, too, and go down the Quinby to Mayfair, then off Mayfair—" and so they walked; he walked, and the cane stumped till they were under the large Blue Bottle, with its still larger red stopper, when who should step out of the open door, just under the Bottle, but Tom Barley.

We say he stepped; he put one foot up very high, and

he brought it down very low, and very slow, for he evidently expected to find the ground upon which to rest much sooner than he did, and did not seem surprised when it was there, but was surprised that it was no firmer in its foundation. Not learning by the experience of one foot, he put the other to a similar test of its locating powers, and with much the same, and it might be, to a person of nice discernment, even more erratic movements from the very high to the very low, till, like its mate and predecessor, it, too, was upon the ground. While either of these was in the air, it gave to Tom's body a swaying movement, which seemed at that time, what it most needed to keep itself comfortably and somewhat safely poised between the perpendicular and horizontal; the former it could not maintain, and the latter it steered to avoid, but, of course, when the feet were down, and the natural sway gone, it had to resort to sundry dodgings between the door and the casement. Intuitively Mr. Barley felt he was in less danger when on one foot than on two, so he attempted again the bringing up of one, but he did it at an unlucky moment —as he was in the act of dodging forward, not back—so the other members being not on the alert to render assistance, he fell forward and rolled down the two short worn-away steps that led from the Blue Bottle tavern, and stopped short at the feet of Mr. Hansom, who recognized him, and was exceedingly pleased to see him; in fact, quite as much so as if it had been Marplot himself; and the exceeding pleasure lay in finding him drunk, not sober.

Sober, Tom Barley was discreet, close-mouthed; drunk, Tom Barley was indiscreet, social, very.

Marplot could tipple as well as Tom, but he never nursed a bottle till it knew more than he did; he had too much at stake for that.

As the doubled-up figure lay at Mr. Hansom's feet, he held Owlie over it, and said, "See that, see that! you've heard of Mr. Tom Barley, brother of Miss Polly Barley. Here he is down, a little down, you see. We are very fortunate. If I thought it right, I would give the keeper of the Blue Bottle a crown for the pains he has

taken to start him in my direction, for he was started, I know ; he never has an original idea when he is on his way down ; but what makes this a clever hit, is the pains he always takes to let himself out, when he begins to come up. It is lucky, surely. Glitter, glisten, glow, and burn, Owlie, and show me what to do with him. I do not quite see. I feel for him, indeed, so it will not do to take him to Cheatem Street; Polly will shake, shake—Isaac told us how she does. Poor cur !—a fly ! I will hail a fly; exactly, Owlie, you always know how to light me. I saw one coming along the Quinby, a short way behind us ; it must be, now—there, there it is ! Hi, hi ! here, here !" and along came the fly with a well-battered door, an intricately wrinkled covering, a driver's seat more aslant than is allowable in a fly of good condition anatomically and financially, drawn by a quadruped spavined in the knees, tender in the hoofs, bobbed at the tail, limited in vision, and not limberly jointed at the neck, handled through leathern ribbons stitched here and there where they had parted actually, or where in danger of doing so, and these ribbons were pulled first to the right, then to the left, then both together up, and both together down, as they caught the driver, who —in his eagerness to reach the passenger—ultimately, of course, the fare—now stood up and jerked, now sat down and jerked. But, poor fellow, he might as well have saved himself this exertion, or else have got out and pulled the fly himself, and let the quadruped come at his will, for the feeble, worn-out beast could only take so many steps to the minute, come what would—fire or flood, heat or cold, fog or sun, men drunk or sober, it was all the same with his gait, which was a walk, an amble, a limp ; not much of either alone, but a goodly amount of all taken together.

The driver and owner of the quadruped and the fly we called a poor fellow, and so he was in body, in garment, in purse, and, heaven be praised ! in family also ; for, since force of circumstances, condition of birth, or whatever it might be, decreed that his subsistence must be more scanty than was either agreeable to a gnawing stomach, or healthful to all those members dependent

upon it, it must needs be a matter that calls for rendition of thankfulness that no one looked to him for food but the beast who longed and lacked enough already; and it were a pity that half a score of growing mouths should have to early learn the hard necessity of sharing with him the longing and lacking.

As they neared the call, "Hi, hi! here, here!" he saw the moving roll of humanity upon the ground; saw the Blue Bottle with its open door, its two unevenly worn steps; saw Mr. Hansom well dressed, benevolent looking; saw the ebony cane, the golden bird with its glittering eyes, and thought such a fare as the surroundings promised, had not been his for many a day; no, not since the seat and the beast had taken such a decidedly downward tendency. As for himself, he had always been on an inclination, which, as years rolled on, was daily growing steeper, and glad he would be when he reached bottom, for then, although he never troubled himself to establish the fact—for then there would be a chance for him to go up on the other side, if he would, without the jerking and coaxing, the pulling and pelting that he had found needful to take him down on this.

He drew the leathern ribbons in such a way that the beast inferred that he was to draw near the curb, which he did, or as near to it as was consistent with the want of suppleness in his joints, and the frailness of the holding together of the fly's wheels; then the driver stepped gently off at the side where the seat was highest, lest the other side find even the pressure of his light frame too much for its endurance, and suddenly slant beyond recovery, walked around the fly, and stood in front of the caller of himself and vehicle.

"'Ere I be," said he, as if he thought Mr. Hansom might doubt the fact of his arrival, so long had he been in coming.

"So I see; yes, so I see. Do you think we can get him into the fly?" asked the owner of the bird, pointing down.

"Lemme see—not werry large, not werry," he said stooping over the now sleeping Tom, and making a rough estimate of his weight. "'Er," he nodded to the

fly, " and 'im," he pointed to the beast, " beent so werry well, to-day, but I reckons we'll try, if you be so minded as to throw in a bit fur the wenture, eh ?"

A little puzzled as to which risked the most, the quadruped or the vehicle, Mr. Hansom replied, looking first at one, then at the other, " Which do you think is venturing the most ?"

" Hit be 'ard to tell, but I thinks summat more o' the wenture comes on 'er, coz ye see 'im gits a bit o' mendin' with feedin' and sleepin', but I finds 'er in the mornin' jes as I lef' 'er the night afore—only hit might be a bit looser and more rackity. 'E's," glancing toward the drunken heap, " 'e's dead 'eavy on 'er hundervurks," the driver explained, pointing to the wheels and whatever passed between them and the body of the conveyance. " So hit be that makes me say 'er 'll 'ave hit the 'ardest ; and if ye 'ud throw in fer 'er, we'll 'eave 'im in," and with this, he threw open the door of the fly, with an air of assurance that passengers would find the inner comfort much greater than the outward look promised. But it might be noticed that he did not let the door swing back, as the driver of a strong, well-hung door would do, but held it very much as if it needed all the support he could give to enable it to ever close upon the occupants, and keep closed during their journey. But he suddenly bethought him that the old gentleman required some assistance with the " 'eavin' in," and then the question at once arose, what was to be done with the door ? Still holding it, he looked down and about him, and, stepping not so far away but that he could reach it with the disengaged hand, saw a large stick ; he bent down and drew it towards him, put one end of it on the curb, the other under the door, and thus propped, its owner ventured to release it.

He had been so busily employed, that Mr. Hansom had no opportunity to complete the conditions of the ride, for the man was a little deaf, when one was near him, but it was always noticed he could hear a call for the fly at a goodly distance.

There seeming to be nothing more to do, the owner of the golden bird said, " I will make good all harm that

comes to the horse or the fly, if you think you can take us to Jericho, with a halt at the Cross Bow. From Mayfair to Friar's Way, and then—"

"I knows, I knows," interrupted the driver, "I lodges thereabout. I knows the way, mebbe, too well."

"Then we will help him in, and be off at once. But see here," and Mr. Hansom wiped his nose, to conceal the merriment he felt when viewing what he had just been pleased to term a horse—"see here, if he takes us to Jericho, can he bring me back?"

"Yes, yes," said the man quickly, alive at the prospect of another fare, "if ye be in no great 'urry. 'E be as good a beast as ye kin find, in will, but 'e beent so werry strong o' wind—that be the trouble, wind, wind. I cud git many a fare more'n I does, if 'e only 'ad more o' that. But I gits down like summat, an' feels 'e's loosin' an' not gainin'; if 'e drops hit an' never gits hit agin, an' the fly ud git too rackity to go, whot 'ud I do? 'er an' 'im no more'n keeps me alive now, an' if so be they ud go—oh, oh! It's all a wenture, an' a werry great wenture, I finds this livin'. Ye thinks other folks does well, an' mebbe ye might till ye comes to try hit, too; but I finds hit beent woth the trouble, an' I thinks when 'er an' 'im goes, I'll jes go, too, an' say no more 'bout hit."

Having thus settled the subject he had been a moment ago so mournfully considering, he brightened, and added in a business-like way, "'Ead or 'eels, sir?" and without waiting for a reply, he said quickly, "as the 'orse an' the fly be both takin' wentures on 'im, I will too," and he seized Tom Barley's feet, and gave him such a jerk that he made a slight effort to free himself from the grasp, which he was too drunk to realize whether it was where it should be, on his collar, or not.

"Hit beent so great as I hexpected," he said to himself as he found the opposition to the grasp and jerk soon ceased. "Hare you reddy, sir? I 'ave the 'eels."

"Yes, yes," cried Mr. Hansom, straightening up and making himself a much taller man than one would expect to find from one so bent. "I have his head, Owlie; show us the way to you." He had placed the ebony cane inside the fly, both for security and good luck.

"Eave heasy; now, sir! let 'im down so 'er hundervurks 'll bear. There!" up comes Barley, "there," he swings back a little from the fly to get momentum—"there," and he is in—"there," and he is down. Mr. Hansom got in after, and as the driver unpropped the door, said, "Ye be a bigger, stronger man 'n ye looks." To this Mr. Hansom made no reply; he was easing Tom a little. The door was swung gently to, the stick secured under the seat, for use upon arrival at Jericho. The man went around the fly, and climbed up on the tilted end, took up the leathern ribbons; the quadruped turned around and looked at him as if for orders, which came in the pull and "up, now," which latter was not obeyed to the letter, for however desirous he might be of so doing, he found it impossible, his time not having come. He went on, not up, till Cross Bow was reached, where Mr. Hansom secured an inside seat in the up coach, for Mr. Thump. This and sundry other rests for fresh supplies of wind, or what was necessary for making it, and between these rests, almost constant coaxing, pulling, and even threatening by the driver, he drew the fly, in an apparently uninjured condition, in front of the door whose sign above promised refreshment to all who would stop.

Mr. Hansom stepped out, entered the inn, as if he was one who had often listened to the swinging injunction, and after a few words with the hostess, appeared, accompanied by a muscular hostler and a grinning, but quite as sturdy "boots," from a neighboring coach-yard, both of whom, careless of the fly's infirmities, reached in, and partly stepped in, and drew out Tom Barley, still drunk, still asleep, and still stupid. The door was the only thing the driver could keep them from bearing too heavily upon, and this he did by standing by it and holding it very firmly. Mr. Hansom followed the carriers, and had their burden put in the room that the hostess assured him, with a merry laugh, belonged to his friend, Mr. Wallace, had it laid upon the bed, covered, and left. He returned, ordered the horse detached from the fly, and saw it led away to be well, but not over-fed, rubbed down, and made as comfortable as it could be.

The fly he ordered off to the nearest smithy to get

what repairs it could in an hour's time. The driver he bid enter, where they soon found before them a well-spread table, for which we have before said Jericho was famed, by the few who knew of it.

The ale was drank ; the lamb, the roast, the potatoes, the bread, the butter, the pudding, the everything set before them, was eagerly partaken of. Mr. Hansom had eaten little during the day ; the driver had eaten little during his whole life ; the one ate heartily, the other ravenously.

"Hit be so werry, werry"—the knife, heavily laden, was lost sight of nearly to the blade—"good, thet I feels," the fork took its turn, and conveyed a large piece of lamb, nearly half a potato, and a small onion as apex of the pyramid, into the yawning chasm—as he was struggling for the cutting of these into not over three parts before beginning their swallowing together, or separately, just as they happened to present themselves to the palate, he continued, "Summat like a man that be's in luck; but I never feels it afore, an' never thinks I will agin." He had been enabled to deliver thus much at one time, because a bit of potato on its way to being digested, having come to a narrow passage at the same time with the small onion, neither would give way till a draught of ale settled the dispute by taking them both with it, and finding the ale of a flavor and foam never before met with, he laid down knife and fork, and clasping both hands around the mug, as if his luck and it might betake themselves away, drained it of its last drop.

"I doesn't calls hit so wenturesum comin', now, does I?"

"I hope you will find it much to your advantage," returned Mr. Hansom, who found great delight in seeing him satisfy his hunger, although it was not done according to the dictates of good breeding, especially when he drew his rough and dirty coat sleeve across his mouth, and caught on it balls of the foam, mixed with cold clod-like bits of the lamb sauce, which the ale had congealed.

"Hit seems werry much like so far," came from a rapidly filling mouth—for knife and fork had again re-

sumed work, pitch and toss, toss and pitch ; whichever was loaded first, got the first chance to unload, till the dishes had been cleared, and mug after mug emptied. Soon after the meal began, the man was seen to unbutton his coat, which had been held quite tightly together, no doubt to keep his stomach from asserting too boldly its needs, for it had thus been kept cramped when it was hollow ; not long after, his waistcoat gave way of its own accord—its buttons, no doubt, were held on by tender threads, and upon even yet more tender cloth, and before it was finished, the upper holding of his breeches was so borne upon that he was forced to lean back, draw in his breath, and before he had time to comply with its demands, the button took upon itself the liberty of popping off, and flying to the farthest corner of the room. Thus, the first receptacle of the food, after it had passed the mouth, had full play, and it filled, and stretched in the filling, till it could hold no more. Mr. Hansom would have called for more, but the man's look of "'ave mercy!"—he was for a time, past speaking—made him forbear to tempt him ; so they sat still for a time, the former reading from a paper he had taken from his pocket, the latter nodding in sleep, and when he could speak, murmuring to himself, "Summat lucky; werry, summat."

Owlie had been overlooking it all by the side of her master's chair, and had evidently approved, for she glittered and glistened. By and by the fly came along, drawn by the smithy's boy, who, besides presenting the bill, also presented a message from his master to the effect that the fly was made of good stuff, and if the owner could give him time, he could make it as good as new.

"Tell him he shall have it as soon as it can be spared," said Mr. Hansom, without once consulting, or even looking toward the man, who had come out, and stood with admiring gaze, hands in pocket and hat knocked back, that nothing should shade his vision. The bill for the repairs of an hour was promptly paid, with a new shilling put in the hand of the boy for the pull from the shop. The horse was brought from the stable, clean, well

rubbed, but not sleek—he was past that, poor fellow—and with a shadow of his youthful roguishness in his eye, he turned to his master for orders, but none came. His heart was now full, fuller even than his stomach had been, and, as he climbed up on the seat without a slant, a tilt, or a downward tendency of any kind, Mr. Hansom saw tears falling down his cheeks, and the coat-sleeve wiped them away from nose and eyes, too, before he could see where lay the leathern ribbons.

"Those are all the thanks I need," said that benevolent gentleman to Owlie, as he closed the door himself, for the owner, in trying to conceal his emotion, had forgotten it—strange, too, for it had long been to him a subject of so much solicitude. Away they went, the horse even essaying, now and then, a trot, but short-lived though it was, it showed his good intentions and his gratitude to somebody—he could not well make out who it was, the driver or the rider. The fly, with oil in her joints, rivets in her springs, a new hinge in her door, responded most cheerfully, agilely, to the horse's extra exertions, and before Mr. Hansom could think it possible, remembering how long they had been before in going, he was set down opposite the Blue Bottle, with its still open door, from which came odors—savory to some.

"'Ere ye be, sir," said the man, opening the fly's door, and yet without the freedom that the knowledge of one entire new hinge, and a re-setting of the old should have lent.

"So I see, so I see. Come, Owlie, come now, glitter, glisten, glow, and burn; somewhere I feel as if there was something coming that needed your light. Let us go and see the woman whose son was so drowsy—Ah, yes, let us catch her before he has a chance to tell her we may drop in on her. There is nothing like it, Owlie, this going when we are not expected."

By this time the bent form of Mr. Hansom had bent itself a little more, and emerged from the conveyance, which began to look as if it had self-respect, and would, its benefactor knew, soon, under the smithy's hand, be ready to play the part of a well-running, genteel transporter of pedestrians, tired out in brain, worn out in

body, or given out in legs, the last like poor Tom, who was still sleeping and snoring, with sensibility double-locked by ale and gin, layered and mingled.

"If you find a fare that does not take you long or far away, do not lose it," said the passenger to the driver, when he and the bird were upon ground. "If not, wait for me here, and I shall need you to take me back, it may be, if the horse can make the journey again."

"Haw, haw!" laughed the man; "now, sir, 'e could go hany distance, 'e be so free in the strings. I 'ad 'ard work to fetch 'im along quiet like; I thought once 'e might run, I did, sir; an' lemme tell ye from 'im an' me both, that we be only too glad to fetch ye warsumever ye wants to go."

Upon this declaration of good-will by proxy and not, the quadruped looked at Mr. Hansom, as if he would say, "He states the case truly, precisely," while the man bowed, or tried to, as best his full stomach would admit of his doing, and stump, stump, stump went the ebony cane around the corner and along the court till it had reached the same door that Samuel and Meg passed through days after—the latter on an errand of mercy, the former on an errand of love. Up the same tumbling flight, but not to the same room; that was not occupied then, it awaited a new-comer into it, and a troubled goer out of it and out of the world. Mr. Hansom rapped at the door they had passed by.

"Come in, come in," a feeble, not a complaining voice, replied.

He obeyed the request, and stood in a small, low, plainly furnished, neatly kept room. A chair made easy by the hands of love, that at the same time did not lack skill, held the bidder to "come in." She was slight of frame, pale of face, save where the tell-tale hectic flushed; she had in her hand a needle threaded with white, and with which she now and then took a stitch in the neatly trimmed patch she was putting upon a shirt, that the visitor saw must belong to the drowsy clerk. If it had been a soft, creamy material, into which she now and then put the needle, one might surely have said she was making her shroud, especially, when ofttimes the draw-

ing out of the thread brought a stab, which, in turn, brought a cough that sometimes caused the quick lifting of the handkerchief, for fear of what might come with it —the so much to be dreaded hemorrhage.

The woman supposing it might be Miss Thump—she was so busy with her own thoughts that she had not heard the stump of the cane on the stairs—seemed quite surprised to see before her the kindly looking, long bearded face of a stranger.

"Ah!" said she attempting to rise, "I did not think it was a new visitor."

"Sit still, ma'm, sit still," returned Mr. Hansom motioning her back into the chair. "I will just say good day, and sit down here," and he dropped into a low seat partially in front of the woman, took off his hat, adjusted the curls and the beard, and being apparently satisfied that neither was awry, stood Owlie in front of him, where he could turn her upon the hostess for inspection if he needed, or upon himself for light to proceed, without being detected.

"I came, ma'm, because your son looked as if I might do you some good. He said you were sick. I know I have found the place and person, because he looks like you. And that garment," he pointed to the shirt, "is mate to the one he has on; and so, you will see, ma'm, I am observing, very, and very seldom deceived—in fact, I might say never. Now I will not worry you with my talk, or weary you with my presence; first because you are not well, and second because I am a very busy man, and do what I have—no, not what I have, what I want to do, and go. Now, I want to help you, and I shall, ma'm, and see no better way of doing it than by just laying this in your lap, and saying, 'Good day, good day, ma'm.' I shall call again," and before the woman had time to say even "God bless you, sir," Mr. Hansom had stumped the ebony cane out of the room, closed the door softly but quickly, and was nearing the bottom of the flight, where he stopped, assured himself again of the exact position of curls and beard, put on his hat and apologized to Owlie for not having given her a chance to light him. "You see," said he, "I could not

keep myself from doing just what I did, Owlie. But why did I do it? That I do not know, Owlie; indeed I do not. But it may be because talking would worry her worse. It does some sick folks, Owlie, you know. However, I do not think she will mind my sudden going when she looks in her lap and sees what I left there," and the mongrel curls shook with the glee of their wearer while he walked towards Harold's one-storied dwelling, where, as he came in front of it, he stopped and said, "I can accommodate my friend Mr. Wallace, if I take his dog along with me; it will save him a walk to-night, eh, Owlie? You know him, Owlie? yes, of course you know him and the dog too. Let us see if he will come," and with the stumping end of the ebony he pushed open the door which was off the latch, on purpose for the convenience of the dog, if he should be called for, and he gave a low peculiar whistle, which was scarcely begun and surely not finished when out bounded Rover pleased to see who awaited him, and quite as glad to get away from dearie, whom he had not even turned back to look at. Mr. Hansom closed the door tightly, and it secured itself by the down-springing lock. The corner was turned first by the dog, then by cane and golden bird, then by Mr. Hansom; the quadruped still in excellent spirits for one in his years and infirmities, the fly looking abler and stronger every moment, the driver whose dinner had begun to digest, and thus relieve him of the fulness that comes of a too hearty meal, looking better satisfied with himself and the world in general, and more especially with his "wenture" in particular, awaited them. The man and the bird stepped, and the dog leaped into the fly, and all duly reached where Tom Barley still slept until an hour after Mr. Thump took the Cross Bow coach and was dreaming happy dreams as the horses carried him rapidly out of London and on to Wenham.

The woman who had risen to try and detain her eccentric visitor found the exertion too much for her, and sank back in her chair. When the pulse was stronger, the head less dizzy, and the hand firmer in its touch, she took up the little parcel, opened it, and lo! a ten-pound note. With closed eyes, her head fell back on the chair,

her lips moved in gratitude and a "Thank God" was audible.

She told her boy when he came home, and she told Susan Thump when she came next day, bringing with her Meg, who thus found her, and afterwards was herself found ministering to her comfort. Her boy knew the donor and gave his name. For this reason Meg had said, "Why, that is the one she calls for!" And as Mr. Wallace heard it he said to himself, "Mr. Hansom shall call."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

TREATS OF MEG, "UNCLE," AND SAMUEL.

Mr. Hansom knew when Mr. Thump returned, but the time was not quite come to see him.

This fact of his not being prompt to call somewhat annoyed Mr. Thump, so when the blind man had given him hope of its nearness he was better pleased. We have said that upon the day earlier in our story, when Mr. Wallace and Mr. Marplot called upon Mr. Trout, the younger member bore away papers in his hand, an idea in his brain, a suspicion in his heart; that the first were made immediate use of, that the last two—well, we will see what became of them. The idea was not of much form at first, but as Mr. Trout's scheme grew in favor with himself it began to assume some proportions, till Mr. Thump became quite satisfied without much tangible proof as a background, that his partner was engaged in a case he had been dishonorable enough to keep exclusively in his own hands, and from certain flourishes of his quill at leisure moments as if practising a particular letter, curve or quaver, he became suspicious that he was also contemplating the making of some name that it was not his legal or moral right to do; so, when Mr. Hansom laid his case before him, and asked him to take it in the name of the unfound client, he was not much surprised that he had reached foundation for his suspicion.

He went to Wenham—more, he went to Ivandale. The first he entered, lingered in and left; the last he did not enter, for it was locked. Where was the key? and where was his right to use it or break the barrier? So again to Wenham, where he gleaned still more than he did before, and then back to Mother Susan, to Meg, to the cottage. Susan was there, the cottage was there, but Meg was at home. His stay had been longer than she expected it would be when he started, and she saw Peleg was unhappy and gloomy at her tarry beyond the promised time; so one morning when he called to see the "child," and try to "git 'eaded right," she left the room suddenly and soon came back with hood and mantle on, knitting in bag—she had commenced something anew. The sprig and its dot for a falling berry she never knit again, the pattern was to her sacred now as was a covering upon the altar of the High Priest when Israel's children bowed before it.—Beside the knitting she had a package of such things as were needful to her comfort.

"Mother Susan," said she, "I must leave you," and a sob would have broken forth if she had not choked it down. There was the stool on which Samuel sat *that* afternoon; there was the cup with the gilt filagree which she had used while he was away, at the especial request of Mother Susan; there were the books she had read because she knew he had read them; there was the softly stuffed pillow in one corner of the high-backed sofa where she had rested her head after the long talks which she and Mother Susan had about the who she was and the why she should and should not be Susan's daughter, till the first was satisfactorily answered; there was the polished tea-urn that the maid had not yet removed, out of which she had turned tea for Samuel that night when he found himself so suddenly fond of the beverage. All these told each its story, spoke each its farewell—for a time only?—she dare hope that much—for a time.

"Meg," began Miss Thump, "you promised to stay, you know till—"

"Yes, Mother Susan," interrupted Meg, while a deep blush spread over her face and neck, which was not unnoticed and unnoted by Mr. Hamper, who looked happy

at the prospect of having "the child" home again, "but I see uncle needs me—Not a word against it, uncle, I won't hear it," and she stamped her little foot just as she used to when the frock was not much below the knee and the white collar was a white ruff—for Peleg began to show signs of remonstrance, for the sake of appearance, against the breaking of a promise. "Mr. Th—Samuel, I mean," she continued drawing the hood at the corner to give a chance for relieving embarrassment, "will soon be home. You know he said in his last letter that we might look for him by the last of the week. It is now Wednesday, that is the middle, and I would dearly love to stay and keep you company, and would, if I thought you needed me more than uncle; but I see how wishful he looks for Meg, and Meg couldn't stay and be happy," and she drew near and smoothed the neckerchief with which Mr. Hamper, with the assistance of Martha and the suggestions of Gaff had encompassed his neck—the same one he had worn into that little parlor once before, when the curtains were drawn and voices were hushed. Then he had a dickey to relieve its monotony, but the present successful or even partially successful surmounting of it by this purely ornamental article of wear was more than either of the above aiders and abettors in the cause of the kerchief dare undertake. Meg saw the knot was at one side and too loosely drawn under and too tightly put over, but she would not have them known by Mother Martha—the deficiencies of that knot, or of other things she was quick to detect in the general get up of Mr. Hamper, with whose everyday apparel she had little hand, but in case of a dress up of any sort she dealt largely in its arrangement.

"Mr. Hamper," began Susan Thump, "I see she wants to go, and I won't say anything against it; but will you promise me that she may come again. Meg don't see young folks enough."

"Miss Thump, ma'm, I feels what ye say, an' ud be glad if things warn't jist as they be; but I feels, 'opes, ma'm, 'opes. I can't allus tell war they come from, but they comes, an' Meg ain't allus goin' to be a Wrecker—" and having thus thrown out a buoy, without any particular cause, Mr. Hamper stopped suddenly, and grasped

for his hat, which he had, after sitting for some time, taken from his head, and put on the floor beside him. He grasped for it, and he grasped so far beyond it that it might be supposed that he had repented throwing out the buoy, and so was about to haul it in, but the truth was, the slightest allusion by himself or anyone else to the parting with Meg, so filled his eyes, that things were distorted under his vision, for he looked through a veil of tears; after having parted this veil by vigorous winks which folded it into two drops, and these being deposited, as he came nearer the hat, into its crown, he saw Meg was pencilling a tiny note, which she put between the leaves of a well-worn book upon the table. Not quite comprehending this, for "Sister Martha" had said nothing to him of her suspicions and their confirmation, he scarcely heard Miss Thump's reply—

"I hope she will not, and I hope you will not either, Mr. Hamper," she added, by way of reconciliation, lest he might feel that she regarded the Wreckers as a most unfit place for dwelling. "I have hopes, too."

Here he began to listen, for Meg had closed the book and was drawing on her gloves, biting her lips, and trying to look quite unconscious of what hopes Miss Thump referred to.

"An' if they be so great as mine fer the child, they be good, an' all she will need fer the rest o' the pull in life," said Hamper, rising and laying his great hand softly on the girl's shoulder. "Now, Miss Thump, I must tell ye, I feels under a cargo o' thanks fer this tow o' Meg in pleasant water. I see she be brighter fer it, an' I promise to fetch 'er agin."

"And let her stay longer," added Miss Thump, with a merry twinkle in her sharp eyes, as she took both Meg's hands, kissed her on either cheek, then on the lips, then pointing to the book, said, "I will see to it, dear."

The girl returned the demonstrations of Susan with sincerity, looked once more at all the things that spoke to her, and with uncle, whom she knew had in times past made many sacrifices of his comfort for her happiness, stepped off the porch, out of the gate, along the Lane, by the blind man's corner, where she stopped, and threw

into his hand a few pence, received a fervent blessing from him, a lap and leap from the dog, and walked on, chatting to Peleg, till they reached the court.

"Uncle," said she, when they were at the door, "I must visit awhile with Mother Martha, and you, meantime, put on your river rig—you will feel more at home—and we will take a row in Snatcher, If there is a breeze we will put up the sail, as we used to, that is, if it does not interfere. The air is good this morning, the sun bright, and it will be cold soon, so I cannot go again till spring."

"Why, Meg, that be good. I'll rig Snatcher, an' rig myself, an' when ye gits reddy, come down to the quay. We'll be waitin'. Snatcher'll be glad to take ye, I knows. She allus dances, I thinks, a bit more when she sees ye, child."

The sun shone warmly, lovingly; the breeze was what it should be under the circumstances—a zephyr almost, at least it was not lively enough to play hide and seek with the sail and the shifter of it, and it was not so gentle but that Snatcher moved along without much help from the one paddle Peleg held, so, if it could not be called a zephyr, it might be named a most considerate and well-mannered breeze. As for the water, it was clear, placid, inviting, as it had never been before. It ceased its washing, washing, and one might suppose it had never hidden the victims of wrong, of treachery, of avarice. Now, all this might really have been, and it might not have been so only in the imagination of Meg, to whom everything looked its happiest, for she had a secret to tell Mr. Hamper, and Mr. Hamper had heart and ear to listen to it. They went straight out to midstream first, then up where Meg talked merrily of everything but the one she wanted him most to know; then, the breeze having listened in vain for the telling, changed its course, and blew down stream, which caused the tacking about of Snatcher so much that it was deemed best to turn her about and let the breeze take them along the same way, so down they sailed.

Meg, beginning to grow embarrassed, dipping her hands in the water on one side, and carrying what they

could hold to throw over on the other, and getting less and less chatty, more and more thoughtful ; past the quay the breeze took them, and down with a hearty will, till they were just about where they had anchored, or rather floated, years before, when Peleg had something to tell, and told it ; but now, as Meg had the something, there seemed little prospect of her following the bold example of Snatcher's captain. The breeze, either tired of listening, tired of waiting, or tired of blowing, it could not tell which—breezes are so fickle—suddenly took itself away where it was more to be appreciated, or else lay quietly down under the water's surface to wait for more of its fellows, and rise in the night as a squall—it is difficult to determine just where such fillers of canvas go, but it is never difficult to tell, that they have gone, and leave a dead calm and a resort to the paddles necessary.

Mr. Hamper took down the small sheet, folded it, and put it under Meg's feet. The sun, it might be, was in league with the breeze, to force the secret out, for scudding clouds, now and then, intercepted his warmest and brightest rays ; the waters, however, still looked inviting. After Mr. Hamper resumed the strokes, Meg could see him better, and at last she said, not carrying the water over this time, but holding it up in the bottoms of her hands, and letting it trickle through her fingers.

"Uncle, you said you hoped I would not always be a Wrecker ; what would you think if I should tell you somebody hopes I may be persuaded to be a Lunley sometime?" She turned her face away and her hands were still, save when the boat's motion carried them along.

He knew something like it must come some day, but he had hoped it might not be till after she was of age, and "knew o' 'er bein' born," as he often termed the fact of ascertaining her origin. He had thought of Samuel and was pleased ; he had thought of the Lane and was not so well pleased. "She war bred fer suthin' better," he always said to himself, 'an' the Lane ain't so fer up from the court as un might wish." He kept this to himself, for he saw Meg's happy look, and he remembered the note put into the book, and the merry twinkle in Susan's eye—yes, he saw it all now, and just as he was about to

answer, he saw Jane, a not very young, but a hale, hearty, rosy cheeked little woman, and heard her—"I be of the same mind, Peleg;" it brought back a warmth to his heart and gave a little tremor to his voice as he leaned forward and touched her on the knee saying, "It be Samuel Thump, Meg, child?

"Yes, uncle, I did not say if you were willing, for I knew you would be, but—"

"And ye knowed right, child, right," interrupted Mr. Hamper, shading his eyes with his great tawny hands, and looking earnestly along the water. One might have thought he was on the wide open sea scanning the horizon for the sail of deliverance, so anxious and far away was his look, and that he saw it for Meg; but he thought not then for himself, unless it were from a craft such as took Jane beyond mortal ken.

"There is a 'but,' uncle. You did not hear the 'but,' did you?" Meg softly asked, reaching so that one hand not now in the water was laid upon that nearest her, the other was through shading and now held the paddle.

"O' what use be un o' them, Meg? They be pesterin' things, an' if I war Mr. Samooel I wouldn't let ye 'ave 'em—'but,' 'if,' Jane said sometimes, but she never said 'em when I said will ye be Jane Hamper? No, she knowed afore then I didn't like 'em, an' she war afraid she might let slip 'er anchor if she did. She said, 'I be steerin' fer the same port, Peleg,' or leastwise that war what she meant. I 'ad the words a bit ago, but they flashed off agin. Well, ye don't want to 'ear o' Jane an' me, Meg, ye wants me to 'ear of ye and Samooel. Now, tell me about the 'but,'" and Mr. Hamper drew in so much of the paddle as would keep it from falling overboard, and laid the hand thus freed gently upon hers, so with her little hand between both of his, the girl knew she could talk her heart; and she did.

Again the sun sent his warmest, brightest, softest beams to listen; again the water was clear and quiet only when it heaved now and then a little sigh as it listened, but the heaving only gave a gentle rocking motion to Snatcher, and saved her from drifting too far; the

breeze still kept itself elsewhere, and Meg kept not back a word, a thought, or a hope. When she had told them, and Mr. Hamper had responded with all the encouragement he dare extend, at her nod, he took up the paddles and pulled up to the little quay and as he "heaved" Snatcher's pretty cargo, he said, "I be goin', Meg, to set full sail fer this port ye want open, an' don't ye be worrit, child, but what we'll clear the water to it."

"How can I ever do enough for you, uncle Hamper? for all you have done for me, a poor little wanderer; and still more shall I say, 'what can I do,' if you help me to find out who I am?" whispered Meg when safely landed.

"Never mind, now, jest ye be cheery an' don't ye be too chillin' to Samooel about the 'ope o' reachin' the port," returned the captain of Snatcher as he secured her to the anchorage and made ready to follow Meg, who had turned on a few steps toward the main street, from off which ran the court.

It was this talk of the heart that made Mr. Hamper declare upon the night Mr. Wallace secured the prize from Gaff, his purpose of seeking an interview with him, and for which he was only waiting to make sure through the blind man that a journey to Jericho would not be in vain; and the morning after the announcement to Mr. Wallace he felt impelled to try, at all events to ask the mendicant; and, accordingly, when he sought him, he found him not; he was with Mr. Trout, so he turned away troubled in mind, heavy in heart, and was well on his way to the Quinby when he heard a light manly tread behind, as if somebody was hurrying on upon him. He turned, and as he did so a hat was raised to him with quite as much respect as if it were honoring a "Sir Peleg," and not the clumsy, uncouth captain of Snatcher, and trimmer and owner of Pryer.

"Good morning, Mr. Hamper," said the voice under the uplifted hat.

"Why Sa—Mr. Thump, good mornin'," and the broad ill fitting hat of Mr. Hamper was knocked, not raised—he never attempted it after he so signally failed in endeavoring to do honor to the good mother of his present saluter.

Three quick steps brought the younger by the side of the elder, and the rejoinder from the former, "I am glad to see you, which way are you going?"

"Well, it don't make a deal either way. I be walkin' much, 'cause I feels oneasy like, an' it beent time o' tide to paddle, so I says, 'Peleg ye better look aloft a bit;' so 'ere I be. Which way might ye be 'eaded?" came from Mr. Hamper, who had slackened his pace. He knew well Mr. Thump's business with him.

"I am like you, Mr. Hamper," returned the legal gentleman. "Business was not brisk this morning, and I took the chance to get a breath of the bracing air."

"But 'ow does ye know but while ye be gone the tide might turn an' the wind blow a gale! There be nothin' like bein' on deck," said Peleg, with an eye on the attentive qualities of the young man to his profession. To himself he added, "That beent much Miss Thump's way o' pullin." Already he began to take bearings as to the financial lay of Meg's future anchorage.

"True enough," laughed Mr. Thump, as he saw Mr. Hamper's words had a deeper meaning than he exactly intended they should convey. "But business seldom catches me off the post, and all work and no play, you know, makes a dull fellow, and I am especially desirous of not being dull now nor hereafter."

Peleg saw the sail was filling and that he must bid the craft it towed along God speed, so he answered pleasantly, "I 'ope ye may never be that, Mr. Thump — fer me—Meg—" The lawyer saw his embarrassment and began at once.

"Meg left a note for me when she left Mother Susan, saying she should tell you herself, so I know what you refer to, Mr. Hamper. I have been to your home, when I could find time for a few moments, and looked in upon Mother Martha; sometimes I found Meg and sometimes not. She is a busy little body among the needy. I thought I should find you there, but was never so fortunate; and perhaps it was as well, for as neither is hurried just now, let us take the time for a fair talk and a clear understanding without fear of intrusion. Which way shall we go?" And Mr. Thump put his hand upon the

arm of Snatcher's captain, as if to turn him about, for they were nearing Wreckers Court.

"It be all the same to me, up stream or down," returned Peleg, and wheeled about with the air of a man who must make a sacrifice, and was going to make it boldly.

"Well, then," said Mr. Thump, "let us go back to the Wilton, and from there to where we may find the way less crowded."

And the nicely fitted boot of the one, kept step to the large rough and coarsely made of the other. The wind sometimes blew the skirt of the fine silken-stitched surtout of the one against the grinningly held, well-patched covering of the other; the passers by looked at the contrast, some smiled, some scanned, some wondered for a moment, but all forgot ere the next square was made.

When a little more roomy the way, because less numerous and less busy the folks who were on it, Mr. Thump broke the silence. "Meg says she will never leave you, Mr. Hamper, till she can say who she is. Now, if you do not object to her becoming Mother Susan's daughter and—my wife," he added softly, "can you not clear, or help to clear, that point? and if not, can you not show her that it is foolish to let a mere whim of pride keep us apart?"

The captain of Snatcher turned fairly about, laid his great unwashed palm on the brim that shaded his face, and it was instantly on a line with his forehead, put one foot forward, very much as if he was stepping on the prow of his little craft, folded his arms, and then said what he had to say.

"'Ye mustn't mind if I calls ye Samooel; it brings yer deck down to mine, so I can step on it the better; so I says, Samooel, Meg war born a leddy, and she knows it, if she don't say it. Ye might o' been born a gentleman, an' between ye an' me I doesn't doubt ye war. There be suthin' about ye that tells it, I allus said, but ye be a man an' can make yer own riggin'; ye can 'ave as many masts as ye like, and they doesn't ask if ye allus 'ad 'em. But Meg be a girl an must sail allus jest as she leaves port. If she 'ave a name on 'er 'ull an' can show 'er papers

ye need never tow 'er, Samooel, she will sail by yer side, or it might be, now an' then a 'ead, but never behind, never; Meg war never born fer that.

So it be no whim, as ye calls it; it be what a born leddy 'ud do. Does ye think if she war a common build she 'ud say 'if' and 'but' to a man as can take the tow in law ye can? We heered o' ye—she knows what they say o' ye—and does ye thinks a Wrecker 'ud say 'wait'? does ye think a Lunley 'ud say 'if'? does ye thinks many o' un as 'ad never looked at Mother Susan and the Lane 'ud say 'but'? No, they 'ud be glad to go under yer colors; but not Meg; no, not Meg. She beent that build. So, now I'll take yer, if ye will, an' say I can give Meg to ye, and feel that the voyage 'll be a good 'un when she can show 'er 'ul an' papers, as I said afore."

"And so I am not to expect help from you, uncle?" returned Samuel pulling off his glove, and cordially grasping the hand extended. "I had hoped you were just the one to make Meg feel differently. Do you think, does she think, it could ever make any change in my love for her, never mind who she is?" he asked with much feeling. "I do not care for her ancestors. I care for her; she does not know who I am."

"Now, Samooel, 'ark ye," interrupted Peleg folding again his arms as if to fortify the resolution he had made. "Ye may see 'er ways be jist as sweet, ye may see she can cut cleaner than most o' craft, but ye will be wonderin', now and then, where she shipped from. Ye can't 'elp it, Samooel, I know it; it be the way men be made. Now, Jane war from a good Yorkshire line that she let go on, an' put out by 'ersel, but she 'ad the build, an' I knowed it, an' many o' time when there war a dead calm, I didn't slip anchor 'cause I knowed Jane war o' stuff as 'ud raise the breeze; she allus did. Now, if I 'ad o' been oncertain o' 'er make, I'd o' let go many o' time, yes, many o' time, but she war ribbed in York, blooded ye 'ud say, an' now, ye mark my words, if ye doesn't see the day when ye'll find yer love drawin' deeper water 'cause ye can say, Missus Thump war the girl o' somebody, than, Missus Thump war the picked-up o' Peleg Ham-

per, Wreckers Court. No, Meg be right, but I didn't tell 'er so, Samooel. I said 'Never mind, child,' but I only done it to ease 'er a bit o' the cargo she carries, fer I tells ye it be a 'eavy 'un, 'eavier than ye thinks. I took 'er up stream an' down stream, an' she tol' me all 'er 'eart, poor child. But look ye 'ere," and he laid his hand on Mr. Thump's arm, and leaned forward to his ear. "I 'ope the thing 'll come to the top o' the water, I does; an' I feels in 'ere, it will, an' soon too." He withdrew his hand and put it on his heart, and while shaking his head slowly he added, "There be a wrong some'ers, an' I beent idle. I pulls a little this way an' a little that, but soon I be goin' to make a pull right a 'ead. Yes, keep yer 'eart, lad, an' see what Peleg 'll do."

"For Meg's peace of mind and happiness, then, I will wait awhile, at least, but not always," began Mr. Thump.

"An' ye 'll not allus, I knows, Samooel. I finds water 'll clear itsel' arter awhile, if ye lets it be, but I knows it be 'ard to wait," interrupted Mr. Hamper. "If it be ye could feel lighter o' 'eart, I might say I 'ave ketched a sail now an' then, when I be on the lookout, an' be's purty sure it 'ails from a port that 'as knowed the child. I can't tell ye anyways about it, till I be more sure o' 'er cargo, but she be 'eaded for Meg, I knows."

"It may be," Mr. Thump suggested, with a brightened look and more cheerful tone, "it may be that I can assist you, uncle."

There was something in this acknowledging of Peleg as bearing the same relation to himself that he did to Meg that touched the former, and whenever he was addressed as "uncle," he felt a warm glow in his heart and a pride that he should be thus called because he had been such, and even more, almost a father and a mother to "the little bit the tide 'ad never the 'eart to carry out," he often said in her younger, almost baby days, when she first fell in his way. He replied earnestly but not roughly.

"No, Samooel, I 'ave sed I'd ship no crew, but if I 'ave to, mebbe I'll call ye. Jest hol' taut yer pluck, an' Meg 'll like ye the better. Doesn't ye pester 'er with teazen' 'er to change wind, but now an' then ye can make as if ye 'oped fer a tack about some day. Ye knows 'ow

to do it, Samooel; ye be well up in law, an' I thinks a lad as old as ye, be well up in love too. Ah! Meg she be a sweet, sweet barque to sail 'long with. Ye 'ave no notion 'ow sweet," and with this exceedingly tantalizing remark, Mr. Hamper tacked about himself and performed the same nautical manœuvre upon Mr. Thump, and proceeded to tow him over the course they had just come, at least so far as the Lane's corner, where they saw the blind man, just taking himself, somewhat hurriedly, by his accustomed post. Mr. Thump would have stopped him, but neither of them had the chance, for he felt his way up to them and stopped himself.

"I hear Mr. Thump's step," said the man, putting out his hand, in the quivering way the sightless do, "and I would like to tell him that John Hansom will see him day after to-morrow, at two o'clock, at Jericho's Inn. You pass along the Wilton to Reeling Lane that cuts off Friar's Way which runs down to Mayfair, but do not go down the Way, it will take you to the heart of town. I tell you this, for the sudden stop of Friar's gets one puzzled, but keep on the Reeling till you pass Armsby Lodge, then turn to Penrose, and by the end of that you will find yourself in the more open Ways. Anyone can show you Jericho's Inn, or it may be, you can see for yourself, 'This is Jericho! Travellers, stop and be re-refreshed.' There, Mr. Thump, you will find Mr. Hansom. You have some one with you, Mr. Thump, just lead me aside where I can have a word with you, if you please."

"I'll shove off," said Mr. Hamper, with a peculiarly interested look at the blind man. "Ye can still 'eave to, an' board each other," and he stepped on one side, still with an expression on his face that might have been light dawning, or it might have been only the shifting of the shadows making ready for the light.

"Mr. Trout might be looked after for the next few days with great profit to Mr. Hansom's cause, I think," said the blind man in a mysterious way to Mr. Thump. "Come, Rover, come, lead me on," and the dog led him on till they were lost sight of.

Mr. Hamper joined Mr. Thump, and both took sev-

eral steps after the man, before they realized which way they were going.

"Do you know that man?" asked the lawyer; then both looking in the direction pointed out, they saw themselves going from, not to the Lane; so, turning together, each held his gaze on the man and dog.

"Ye me ask what I beent jist ready to say 'yes' to, nor 'no' to. I thought once I did, and then I thought maybe I didn't," came from Mr. Hamper slowly, as he took off his hat and ran his stiff brown fingers through his unkempt locks, as if in their tangled meshes lay a hope of elucidating something, he could not tell exactly what.

"And I thought the same. The dog, I am sure, I have seen before," said Mr. Thump, with no less of a hazy look, as if light was also struggling through his mind.

"I war to 'ail 'im, too, when I war reddy to see a man at Jericho," remarked Peleg, after a short walk in silence, "but I thought I'd 'eave to a bit an' let ye go. Mister Hansom beent the man I goes thar to see, though; it be Wallace, Mister Wallace, an' that looks as nigh to his dog as one craft in two waters."

"Wallace, Wallace," murmured Mr. Thump to himself, after parting cordially with Mr. Hamper, and promising to keep up a brave heart, and hurrying on to his office.

"Thar be many paddles, but not so many be doin' the paddlin' as un might think at a first lookout," said Peleg to himself, as he walked leisurely down the Wilton on his way to Wreckers Court.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

NO HOPE FOR MISTRESS BOGGS.

THE Bottlers were not many of them astir when a man with a frightened look, timid air, and fleet footsteps, that is, as fleet as he could make them under the dread he seemed to labor—it was not a dread of what was before him but behind, and yet nothing, nobody was following—entered the court.

"It seems so strange," he whispered to himself, "so strange not to be called back. I shall never get used to it, I know, and yet I am sorry, very sorry for her; but why should I be either, for she has not been sorry for me all these years? It seems just as if I must run to the area and not rap at the third house from the corner." Tap, tap, tap.

Harold was awake this morning before the sun was up, or rather out before him, for he meant never to be caught again, so long as he was the busy little body we first found him. He heard the tap, the dog heard it, too, but the dog's master did not. He was worn out so truly and thoroughly with the tugging of the past day or two at heart, at brain, at nerve, that, after rounding out another pile of candle-ends, but not quite so full as the night before, he had literally fallen upon Harold's bed and slept the sound sleep that he must have, or his task would never be accomplished; so no one greeted the timid little fellow who ventured the tap, tap, tap, but Isaac with the dog at his heels. He did not put on his cloak or shoulder his sack, for, as he said when he unbolted, unbarred, and unlatched the door, and put out his long nose with his face directly behind or as near as could be, "I thought it was you, Boggs, I was sure it was. Ha, ha, ha! don't be afraid, I haven't got an

area. No, I have not, nor a cat, nor a shop, no—I must hold myself. I must, for I want to straighten and can't; there ain't room, no, there ain't; what shall I do? what shall I do? I have it; yes, see; Boggs, see," and he fell upon his open palms and stood upon them, and balanced his head upon the black silk button that held together the half orange peels of his cap, while his long pointed shoes performed such forward, backward, and lateral movements as were necessary to sustain the balance.

Boggs had looked forward to his first visit to Isaac for years with the most pleasurable anticipations, but to be greeted thus, was too much for his comprehensive powers, and he sat down on the step, literally because so frightened that he could not stand up. He put his hands over his eyes to shut out the danger into which he thought the Little Man in mental aberration had put himself, then, as he heard neither the snapping short of the cervical bones nor indication of the dislodging of the dorsal, he ventured to part the middle and index finger of one hand and peep—still the pointed shoes were aloft, still the black silk button held its ground, still the hands with their long thin fingers were flat and firm; just as another fit of terror seized him and the fingers were closing out the sight, the shoes were still, then they wavered a little, then they swung forward, backward, forward, back—and as it flashed over the timid Boggs what might be Isaac's intention, he began speedily to draw down the index finger, for he had not finished the closing when the stillness fell upon the shoes, but before he could do it over went the shoes, the silk stockings, the shorts, the jockey's coat—over, backward, bringing the Little Man upon his feet with the black button atop.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he laughed at the trembling Boggs. "It is better than nothing, but not so good as if there was more room for up, down, down, up—oh! it is straightening out that makes a person feel good. Try it, Boggs, try it; I will hold your feet till you know how. Why, if I couldn't straighten out where would I have been years ago? It has saved me from many and many a draw up. Yes, it has, Boggs. Do you know what a draw up is?"

"Yes," replied Boggs, glad that the Little Man's attention had been taken from the proposition he had made to teach him the niceties necessary for a successful "straightening out." "Yes, I saw it done an hour ago, and I'd rather not see it again, although—" and he gave a deep sigh of relief—"although it might be better for me." He was still sitting; he had done so little of it at his leisure for so many years that he enjoyed it thoroughly. Isaac looked down. Boggs seemed so unconcerned as to how long he sat, as to what he had come for, or as to anything but being unmolested, that it flashed upon him in a twinkling, and he held himself at the knees, at the sides, at the ears while he laughed, suppressing somewhat the loudness lest Great Heart might be disturbed.

As soon as he could speak, he said, his eyes overflowing with the tears of his merriment, "I see it, I see it; Mistress Boggs has drawn up; I thought it would come to that; yes, I did."

"But you don't tell the best," returned Boggs quietly and resignedly, "she can't draw down again. He says so, the man we called in to tell us why she couldn't talk. She was took sudden, and it's all over one side. He thinks she'll never talk much again, and he knows she'll never walk."

"Who is with her?" asked Harold, his kind heart touched at the thought of the poor woman alone.

"Joe said he would sit by her; she likes Joe; always has. She told me only last night, if I had only been a man like Joe, that the shop would never have worn her out as it has. She never thought how the area had worn me out; oh, no, she never thought of me. But I do not mind it now, so long as it drew up her tongue a bit, for you see that it's mighty unpleasant for a man that can at last sit down and not get up till he gets ready, to hear a body say, 'Boggs, why don't you? Boggs, why do you?' No, Isaac, I shall put spikes on the area wall so it won't worry her, I shall make good bargains and tell her about them. I shall make it as easy for her, you see, as I can, but of course I must jingle the money-box, else how could I make change with the customers? I shall

get a maid for the cooking and looking after Mistress Boggs—she shall not be neglected; while I shall begin to look about a little and see for myself whether Boggs cannot be a man—I do not think it is too late. You may think I made my plans quick; yes, I did and I didn't, you see. I had a hope that this might come some day, and so as I had not much else to do I had the plans all ready. I find it was not a bad idea, for now, you see, when I have something to do they are ready to hand—no stopping to make them." And having thus delivered himself, Boggs folded his hands and sat perfectly still.

"Good! good! Hiram; I like to hear you talk so; now you will get up in the world, I know. I shouldn't know you, though, you look so like what you always ought to. But come in, come in, and tell me what I can do for you," said Isaac in a cheery way.

"No, no, thank you, I will not this morning. I can come whenever I like, you know, now. The longer I am away the stronger, the braver I feel, and the more I like to sit; but I will go now, for it will be time soon to open the shop, and I must make good trades to-day. I only came to tell you that we thought she wanted to see you; Joe thought so, and he told me how to come. It ain't hard to find; I shall be here again," and Hiram arose, adding, "When shall we see you at Cross-Cut Lane? If she could talk I'd take you home with me, but she can't, so come when you can."

"Ha, ha! how I like to hear you talk," said Isaac, patting Boggs on the back. "It does me good. You will do, Hiram, you will do. But what did the man call the draw up?"

Hiram looked down at the step, looked across at the green-grocer's corner, looked up at the little patch of sky, but the name did not come, at least, only so far as "Par—par—I can't get it, Isaac."

"Paralysis," suggested the Little Man.

"Yes, yes! that is what he called it, and no hope with it, he said—that is, no hope of walking, as I told you. I listened more to the no hope than to the name, you see," he replied with a quiet look at Isaac.

"That was right, that was the best you could do,

Hiram; I will call sometime to day," he added as he saw Boggs was moving off. "I do not gather much now, and am in not so much of a hurry as I was once. There is still so much to do, but somehow I take more time to do it. Good day! know the way back? Yes! that's good, Hiram, you'll be a man as is a man now; good day," and he turned towards the dog, who was looking and listening, when he suddenly bethought himself and called, "Hiram Boggs—Mister Boggs, I mean!"

Hiram had moved away leisurely; he was fast losing the frightened look and timid air he had upon entering the court. He was not far off, and so stepped back, when Harold said with a pained look on his face, "How did it come over her? When?"

Hiram answered the latter first, saying, "An hour before break o' day, not more than two ago—I did not see it come."

"Anything bring it that you know of?" he continued questioning, dropping his voice almost to a whisper.

"Yes, mad," was the laconic reply.

"Mad at what?"

"She was dreaming that the area was full o' cats, and that I wouldn't go to 'em; so she got so mad she drew up and there she is. The man we called says excitement of any kind 'll do it. I have seen her madder before, but it didn't make the draw—wasn't ready I suppose," and he stood perfectly still, evidently waiting for more questions.

None came, but Isaac looked troubled and said, "That's all, Mister Boggs. She can hear?"

Boggs nodded affirmatively.

"Tell her I will come as soon as I can," and he went in, followed by the dog, to where Mr. Wallace still slept, and began his preparations for breakfast, but so noiselessly that the sleeper was still unconscious. He went out with the black jug for the pennyworth of milk with the pennyworth of cream afloat upon it, filled the legal bag with whatever was needed, forgot not more fags for the dog, and was back again; but he was not so joyous as he had been, his face wore a thoughtful look and he might have been heard to say, "Excitement of any kind.

Well, I told Great Heart I'd watch and not gather for awhile, till he gets his wrong righted, at least; then I must look to my own, Great Heart first always; then after that how I must gather—the lady's-maids how I have looked for 'em, but never saw *her* face among 'em. I have been well over the Great Chimney, and never saw or heard of her; but I shall yet—yes, I shall find her, and we will go back. Oh! oh! how that tore my heart; but I won't let it draw me up! no, no. Excitement of any kind; I'll remember that, I will," and passed in again to the one-story dwelling, where the tea was simmering and the coals waiting for the juicy chops he speedily laid on them.

When all was in readiness he wakened Mr. Wallace, who, after rubbing of the eyes and stretching of the limbs, arose, bathed face and hands in the clear, cold water Isaac had just drawn from the pump in the centre of the court—one thing that gave lavishly and without price to the poor.

They ate and they drank. Dearie, after much smoothing of her feathers and eyeing of the dog, jumped into the open doorway and cried, "Time's up! time's up!" more directly addressing herself to Great Heart, who at once arose, and from his pocket drew some grains which he held out at some distance from the cage. The bird flew out and alighted on his finger, helped herself from his hand, or rather took all there was, and then, as if she thought one supply exhausted, she would demand another, turned her head towards her master and cried, "I'm in a hurry! I'm in a hurry!"

"Ha, ha! I thought you would be soon in a hurry to get to the parent. Come, come, dearie, just here is your place." She flew and perched upon the Little Man's chair in obedience to his invitation. He gave her crumbs from the roll he was eating, and when she had enough, still lingered lovingly about him, pecked the black silk button and laid her head on each of the orange peels, as if to see which was the softest. Isaac was touched by her affectionate mood; he had felt very tender at heart since Hiram had gone, and it took but little to give a watery look to his eyes. He did not feel

so merry now when thinking of silent Mistress Boggs, and when he told Great Heart of his early visitor and the news he had brought, he drew a picture quite as pitiable of her as he had always done before of her husband.

When the dog had eaten all the fags, or as many of them as were needed to satisfy himself, the starling had gone back to her cage for her morning bath and to brood over the dog's indifference, when Mr. Wallace had gathered together in order of their importance the papers of which he had during the night, with the assistance of Isaac, completed the reading, and the Little Man had cleared the traces of the morning meal by crumbs swept into the fire, dishes laid in the cupboard, towel and pan put upon their nails, and opening of window and door to let in what fresh air the court could spare—and it was little enough it had—then Mr. Wallace said, "What work for the day?"

"That is just it, Great Heart," returned Isaac, "what work?"

"Let me see, I was not at Jericho last night; it may be Joe called. He has always done so when he had anything to report," began Mr. Wallace.

"And that has been but little so far," interrupted Isaac.

"Yes, but it will be more active soon. He will have nothing to say save that, it may be, Mr. Trout has called upon Ivandale's future Mistress," laughed Great Heart. "The blind man baited him yesterday for securing her before she became the heir of the Radnor's, and it took —yes, he snapped at it. So you need not be surprised to hear of a union. It is well, very well; Mr. Trout will make a most exemplary husband, no doubt, and she —well worthy of her origin."

"When will you call to see her?"

"Not at all, unless it is necessary to the establishment of the claim we work for, Harold. I prefer not to see her; it would bring back memories that I must keep down, you know."

"Yes, yes, Great Heart, they always make you sad; and what wonder? what wonder?"

"You say, good Isaac," said Mr. Wallace turning the subject quickly, "you will call upon poor Mistress Boggs; so then you may tell Joe to report here and not to Jericho, hereafter."

"Yes, so I can, so I can. Now, what else? You remember I shall not gather now, but watch if she comes into the court again and alone. I shall know it, and never take eye from her till Mr. Hamper's door shadows her. No, I cannot gather when you need me, Great Heart," said Harold earnestly.

"How glad I shall be, good Isaac, to see you in the rest you have so faithfully earned."

"But it won't be the rest you pray for," broke in the Little Man sadly. "It is coming—a rest, yes, it is coming; I heard *them* talk of it last night. They said it would come suddenly, and it will."

"No, no, Isaac, not yet, not yet. Come now, let me see again," and Mr. Wallace led the Little Man from himself easily, for his nature was volatile—he could straighten out and be merry one moment and the next draw up or cry. "There is Mr. Hamper; I did not go to the river last night. See him, if you can, and say I will be down to night if nothing should happen, and ask him when he will visit Jericho to talk with me. Tell him the weather is growing cold for the blind man, and he will not be found at the corner of the Lane so much now."

"That's good," cried Isaac, "it makes me—" and up, down, down, up he went, till thoroughly straightened out he stood upon his feet and said, soberly, "Now what of the papers of state for Mr. Hansom? Ha, ha, ha! Mr. Hansom, that's good, Great Heart, very good; ha, ha! but I can't straighten out again—no, once I could, but not now. I am weaker than I was once. Getting ready for the rest, you see," he added sorrowfully. "But now I must get ready for work."

"I shall not need any more papers than these at present," said Great Heart, "the time has not come for showing what we have. I will wait while you go to Cross-Cut Lane, then I will see Mr. Hansom."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

MR. HANSOM STILL REFUSES TO RECOGNIZE CHANCE AT WORK.

Two o'clock came; Mr. Hansom awaited Mr. Thump and Mr. Thump awaited Mr. Hansom at the same moment. The former alighted from a newly covered, newly painted, newly varnished, newly cushioned, and newly curtained fly, drawn by a horse whose knees could never be limbered, but whose hoofs had been hardened; whose tail could never be lengthened, but its unseemliness was not so apparent since a bright, new, well made harness with striped ribbons was laid over the now not protruding thighs, nor the too plainly to be distinguished ribs of the animal, so well had a few weeks' feeding told upon him. The driver looked sleek, as if he were more used to a dinner of plenty than when we first met him; he was smartened in dress, in bearing, and, in short, they all three looked much the better for the "wenture" the man took when he risked the fly's underworks with the drunken weight of Tom Barley.

"Glad to see you, glad, very glad," said Mr. Hansom as he followed the golden bird on the ebony cane out of the conveyance, for Mr. Thump was just putting foot upon the steps of Jericho's inn.

"And so am I to see you, Mr. Hansom," returned the young lawyer as he turned about and assisted the old gentleman to the ground. They shook hands most heartily and entered the inn when the hostess who seemed prepared for their coming led them to a small room in the second flight which contained a large table and two chairs; on the former were a stand of ink, one of sand, a rack of quills and pens, packages of various sized paper. The chairs were not what would be called very

easy, and they were not the hard wooden seats usually found at an out-of-the-way inn, but they were well suited to the comfort of two men who were to handle a subject that would bear no lolling nor idle leaning upon.

The elder led the way into the apartment whose floor was bare, save in front of the chairs, where two rugs were laid; the cane went stump, stump, stump, until it came before the larger seat, where, after assisting its master down into it by allowing itself to be well borne upon, it was stood against one of the arms, not left leaning and neglected as an ordinary cane would have been, but with its head up, so that the golden bird could command with her glittering eyes all that lay upon the table. The younger followed, him after throwing aside his outer covering, for without the weather was cool, but within, the room being sunny, was sufficiently warm without a fire. Mr. Hansom wore a short cloak, or it might be termed a long cape; it was made of velvet that was not newly bought, and yet it had seen little wear; it had a broad collar that was made to do under all circumstances just what it was then doing—lay down flat upon the shoulders, to which it was tightly fastened at the corners by a bit of heavy black silk embossing, which, had one looked closely, might have been deciphered into an eagle's beak and a lion's claw—keenness and strength—but they were so nicely concealed by stems and vines, dots and spots, that only a sharp eye would see them. After sitting for a few moments, as if to recover the breath he was supposed from his panting to have parted with on his way up a stairway, which was in truth a little steep, and after seeing that Mr. Thump was likewise seated, he arose without his cane and walked to the still open door, drew from his pocket a small silver whistle, and from it sent forth a peculiar note, a call was the beginning of it, a command the middle, and a trust was the close of it. The first was hardly under way when a door leading from the opposite side of the passage was pushed open and out came a nose, a head, a body, a tail—a dog. He pattered a step or two, to be sure that he was all there, for the door he had opened was more inclined to swing forward than back, it had been newly

hinged ; finding no part of himself lacking from the tight squeeze he bounded across and stood up on his hind legs, put his fore paws in the vicinity of the crest, and so like the lion's claws did they look, that one might have said they were a diminutive of the original. He lapped the cheeks, nosed the long gray beard of Mr. Hansom, then got down and awaited orders.

"On guard, Rover," came at once, "Owlie within and you without, and what have I to fear?" At the word "guard" the dog stretched himself at full length before the threshold, paws extended, head upon them, eyes open, ears forward, and tail on the alert.

Mr. Hansom closed the door, crossed the room and took his seat again. Mr. Thump saw the dog, noted him well; he had done so twice a day or two before, if he could believe his own eyes and listen to his own suspicions.

"No ears can hear, no eyes can pry now, sir. That dog knows more than many a man, and he would be torn into shreds, veritable shreds, sir, before he would leave there without my leave. Give me a dog for guarding; give me an owl for guiding, and I can touch bottom anywhere," said Mr. Hansom with the most perfect satisfaction, and putting the bird where she could see still better, and be seen by both her master and his guest.

"Whether it be attributed to the effort of the dog or the owl, Mr. Hansom, I cannot say, but I feel sure we shall soon find rock for our feet in this labor," replied Mr. Thump as he drew forth from a dark blue bag with a large T worked on one side, in another shade of the same color—Susan's work, of course—a bundle of papers, and spread them upon the table. "The way will soon be cleared, I doubt not, for the somebody, but who and where is she? However, of that even, I do not despair. One round at a time and the ladder is mounted. Let me make plain the way and I shall trust, with the aid of dog and bird, if you will lend them to me, that is, if I should need them, to finding her just when she is wanted to crown success."

"Why, that is good, good," cried Mr. Hansom, rubbing together his hands, upon the little finger of one, the

lawyer now saw a heavy seal ring with the same crest, the lion's claw and eagle's beak, sunken upon it. "I fear you cannot yet see how good that is, but you will some day; eh, Owlie? Now, now for work; glitter, glisten, glow, and burn your brightest," and he looked eagerly at the papers through a pair of gray eyes, whose depth and earnestness belied the light tones of his voice.

"I went to Wenham that very night upon the day of which you gave your case into my hands," began the lawyer.

"Stop; not my case, the client's case, the unknown client's. Mr. Thump's Client let us call her; go on, go on," and just then he bethought himself of the mongrel curls. Putting up his hand he found his hat over them, or so much and so many of them as it could get, so he took it off, put it on the floor beside him, and listened, with his hand half way on its upward journey to the curls again.

"As you please, Mr. Hansom," returned Mr. Thump pleasantly. "As I was saying, I went to Wenham."

"By Cross Bow coach?"

"Yes, sir."

"An inside seat?"

"Yes, sir, and I have you to thank for it, I know."

"Owlie, sir, Owlie; she lighted me to it; thank her."

"But she could not go alone, so I must thank you both," and the lawyer bowed his acknowledgments to bird and master. "I reached Wenham by nightfall of the second day."

"Many passengers?" interrupted the elderly gentleman still with the same eagerness in his eyes as they were fastened on the papers.

"From London to Thornby but few; then the coach was well filled, and well covered, I might add, for there was no room to spare outside," the lawyer replied puzzled at the willingness of Mr. Hansom to spend so much time over trivialities when weighty matters were so near at hand. However, he kept his patience and temper, which he dimly began after awhile to suspect were just what the man was trying to see if he would lose.

"And you got to Wenham and got out *at* Wenham, I suppose?"

"Yes, and took lodgings at a modest inn outside the heart of the town, called the 'Restful,'" continued Mr. Thump, determined to give as close particulars as he thought might be demanded if he withheld them, "where I met many a fellow, in the tap-room, who had sharpened and polished steel under the tuition of William Seebold."

"Listen, Owlie, now, listen!" broke in the elderly gentleman. "But how did you know that was the tap-room where they talked at nights? how did you know it? Chance didn't take you there; nothing goes by chance."

"No, not this time. I learned from the driver and some of the coach's passengers what I needed to know of the town."

"Ah, yes, yes; busy, busy even in the coach; we approve, Owlie, eh? yes, we do," and he nodded to the other to go on.

"I learned what only a rough coat and rusty appearance generally would give me the opportunity to, with now and then an emptying of a bumper, that almost the last servant to leave his master at Ivandale fled to the house of Major Ray, that he attended the old soldier in his last moments, and took from him papers that we must possess. But never mind now, let me tell my story. The Lord of Ivandale came often to see the major before his death, and over him the latter held an influence which so soothed him that the old reprobate began to realize that it might be a manly thing if he tried to right things. This I picked up from their talk in a few homely phrases from one and another, and, cleared of all ornamentation, thus it is; also, that the old lord lingered in and about the village for some time, now cared for by the old servant whose name was Barclay, Jonas Barclay, and now wandering from door to door. All knew who he was, but none took the steps to detain, or have him detained. One day he was missed and thought to have died in some lonely place, for it seems he had a fancy for seeking such in and about the village. Some

felt pity for him, but more remembered what he had done when he took from them William Seebold, whose name they speak almost with reverence. Their children had been told of him and his good works, and they pointed the fingers of scorn at his father. Those who pitied the latter searched for him, but no trace could be found. Months, at last, rolled by, and one day he appeared in Wenham as suddenly as he had disappeared, wandered about, found that the last link between him and his old life was gone—Jonas was dead. He laid his roofless head, one night, on the very steps of the ruined home of William Seebold, and the next morning they found him there dead, too."

Mr. Thump stopped and looked at Mr. Hansom, who instead of expressing satisfaction at the settling of the needful point—the decease of the last Radnor, only gazed at something in the distance and said, "The ruins are untouched? the vines, are they green?"

There was something about this desolated place that held for Mr. Thump a peculiar charm, and about its still pretty grounds he spent much time during his stay in the village, so he was not displeased at the disposition of Mr. Hansom to talk of it.

"Those that the frost cannot blast are green and grow as if they loved the place; and I do not wonder that they do. The ruins are still the same," he added after a moment in reply to the first question. "It was bought, I hear, by a Sir James Lambert, who, I was assured by more than one of the townsfolk, if I could find, would aid me. When he left the place, which he did when the wife of Colonel Ray met with misfortune, he said the vines should never be cut till he cut them himself; so they have grown, and I could not help fancying to myself as I tried sometimes to trace a long branch from the charred casement to the crumbling wall, how many pleasant home pictures those windows must have lighted, for if traditions are true of William Seebold, he had all the virtues his father lacked, with his faults entirely left out; he had a wife worthy of his love, a helpmeet in all his good works, and a daughter, the little Mary whom the major sheltered so warmly, who held the hearts of all Wenham

in her hands. I should ask nothing better, Mr. Hansom, for a monument when dead, than the same touching tribute paid to the Seebolds, and I will add both Major Ray and his son, by the simple folk of the village. Kind to the needy; gentle among the poor; proud among the proud! Did you tell me, or did I hear there, that the heiress whom we seek must needs be charitable?" Looking at Mr. Hansom, he paused for a reply. His head was bowed upon both hands, which in turn were leaning on the bird, whose glittering eyes were not to be seen. Were they, like her master's, turned back upon the past, for whom it needed no fancying to make these pleasant home pictures? They were veritably engraved upon his heart; he had but any time to draw aside the curtain which the stirring life of the present must needs have to cover them, and the happy home of William Seebold stood before him. He was of an age and stature when he first crossed its threshold that was not ripe enough for manhood and too mature for boyhood, and back and forth he had gone from his own not far away, to this one, till one morning a silence fell upon the tottering walls, a sorrow fell upon the hearts of the people. For a few moments thus he lived again at Wenham, but awakened himself speedily to what lay before him in London, and said without heeding Mr. Thump's question, "Every word you have heard of them is true. Owlie, did you listen? Covered? Ah! pardon, Owlie, pardon. How can I expect you to see if I cover you? There, you will soon look; I will soon look; Mr. Thump, our adviser, will soon look," and he nodded to the papers, one of which the lawyer drew forth, and opening handed to him.

It was sealed, stamped, and ribboned by the magistrate of Wenham, who was pleased and honored to deal out justice to the erring and unfortunate; settle by wave of hand or nod of head landlord's rights and tenant's wrongs; pronounce banns, if need be, and hear, in awful dignity, the tales of woe from those who wished them dissolved; certify to correct records of births, deaths, deeds, titles, wills, and anything that falls to the lot of one man to serve Her Majesty in Her Majesty's

realm by maintaining order, peace, and good-will among a people who have never known aught else. So it was he who had, with flourish, given to Mr. Thump this positive proof that the Lord of Ivandale had duly died and been duly buried within the precincts over which he held sway.

"Ha!" the same pompous old fellow; we remember him, Owlie, eh?" and Mr. Hansom's gray eyes saw every word and letter of the text, every curve of the seal, every fold of the ribbon, which evidently an old acquaintance still in magisterial robes, had caused to be prepared by an underling for his signature, which Mr. Hansom the elderly gentleman at once recognized.

He returned it to the lawyer, who laid it by itself, to wait on one of its fellows.

"Let me settle the Ivandale question first," said the lawyer, "and then we will go back to the Ray, and even to the Glentworth—did you know of this one? yes, for you told me of it."

"Well enough, well enough, sir; I know of it," chuckled Mr. Hansom. "I see you looked the ground well over—good, very good thing to have an adviser; go on."

"Armed with this document," continued the lawyer, pointing to the proof, "I went to Ivandale, a tedious, tiresome journey; by railway a short distance, by coach a long, by saddle a still longer, but I found I had gone a very roundabout road, and the best, by far, was to keep saddle all the way and make short cuts across the country; this I did on my return, and a pretty country I travelled over, too, Mr. Hansom. To one shut up all his life in London it was a new world. I found Ivandale covered with many acres of rich meadow and heavy forest, all growing without scythe or axe having touched them for many a year. If the country about were held, not by the lofty lord, but by the rich farmer, there would be drawn, no doubt, to its abundant game and dropping fruit hordes of pillagers. But its nearest neighbors still hold a horror of the place, and those in their service still remember the whisperings of their older fellows as they spoke of the Radnors or anything that pertained to them.

So it lies a vast luxuriant waste. The castle itself would be as a living tomb, I know, to one who might enter it. The walls are covered with vines so intertwined with each other that the ivy, the creeper, the sweetbriar, and the climbing wild-rose, have seemingly one root. I could not enter the grounds, but I clambered upon their broken walls and looked upon what could thus be seen. The frost had thinned the foliage of the trees, and I could catch the shape and form of here and there something that vines, dying and letting go their hold in places, showed what might be beneath. Geographical research and official inquiry showed me that Ivandale belongs to the borough of Quelton, but one would have said it could and would belong to nothing and be under the jurisdiction of no one. It has a something about it that is so weird, so unearthly, that it seems to defy the hand of man to break its stillness or molest its mould. If the rumors are true that orgies by the lower world are still held there, I should say they could not in all England, and I doubt if in the whole world, find a more suitable place. To Quelton, or rather the heart of it, I turned horse, and there I lingered many days. I found a certain fellow there from London. He was, I learned, searching records for Lord Radnor's death. I half liked him; he did not seem wicked but weak.

One day he began hob-nobbing with a country squire, and boasted of his power to drink thus and so without getting drunk. At the third glass he grew limber in the neck, at the fourth he leaned in body, at the fifth over he went, while the squire sat firm in nerve and cool in head. He slept, long and loud, and being not far removed from him that night, I could not sleep; the snoring from the fellow was intolerable—so I went to his room to turn him over or under, any way to bring relief, when at the first shake I gave him from the coat collar he begged off, sat up and began, as if to some one he dreaded and feared, a full explanation, in a maudlin way to be sure, but I think none the less true, of how he came to Quelton, and I considered myself the luckiest fellow known when I heard his story. You surely will acknowledge chance now, Mr. Hansom."

"Because you came upon Tom Barley sober and Tom Barley drunk, sir?" interrupted the elderly gentleman rubbing his right hand upon the head of the golden bird in great glee. "No, no, we never do that, do we, Owlie, eh? No, because we know chance has nothing to do with our work. There is a guiding power to all this, Mr. Thump. Call it the workings of justice if you will, but never call it chance; you will see for yourself before we are through with this. But go on with Tom Barley."

"Barley, Barley," exclaimed the lawyer; "how know you his name was Barley—Tom, too, Tom!—why I know a Miss Polly Barley who had a brother Tom; but this surely cannot be—"

"Yes, it is, sir; go on, go on," cried Mr. Hansom. "I'm waiting patiently till it is my turn to talk, and then I will tell you something."

"He told me he had been sent by Marplot and by my partner, Mr. Trout. This, of course, surprised me; and lest he might tell it to some one upon whose ears it would fall as meaningless, I listened," continued Mr. Thump smiling, "and I learned his story, but cannot but believe it was colored by drunken fancies, for it is a base, long, and deeply planned plot by one who I hope will prove that he is well named—Marplot, and will mar his own not our plots."

"No fear, no fear, is there, Owlie, dear? How you glisten and burn!—you see what it is to have a legal adviser. Yes, you approve. So do I; I do indeed, Mr. Thump," and Mr. Hansom motioned him to proceed.

"I took notes, and here they are. I will give them to you, if you wish, while now I will put them in as few words as I can. Marplot stands ready, at any moment, to claim the Ray estate; he is the only heir, although he is a distant one. He wants to see the way clear for somebody's possessions of Ivandale, and that somebody I must find; why he should I cannot yet see."

"The devil that he is," broke forth Mr. Hansom stumping the ebony cane so furiously on the floor that the dog outside growled ominously.

"A slyer one I never saw for one who is not brilliant

in mind or active in body, judging from what I have heard through you and the people of Wenhan, who well remember his—"

"Sliminess, sir, sliminess," interposed Mr. Hansom, "no other word for it, I know him well, ah, too well; wait until I talk, Mr. Thump; the adviser first and then the one he advises, sir."

"Yes, sliminess will do, he is worthy of it no doubt. He claims, I find out, a previous marriage of Colonel Ray, which must have been the cause of the trouble between himself and the mother of Margaret, and that sent her from him, no doubt with reason at least partially dethroned; but what became of her? All trace, so far, is lost, and your somebody is trying to heir Ivandale. Barley—I must not forget to finish him first—was also sent by Trout upon an errand apart, but of that he could not give me a clear idea, for he grew sleepy, surly, and dropped off into quiet slumber. The rest of the night I traced and retraced; I dare not suppose the breadth of a hair, for we have much to cope against, Mr. Hansom, and I must prove all I assume. I tried to make the acquaintance of this man when sober, but he was most discreet and non-communicative. By the way, he did not go by the name of Barley, and I suspected he had an assumed name, for he never answered to it readily. If Marplot appears at Wenham to claim the Ray estate, I hardly think the quiet, justice-loving people of the village could keep hands off him. They do not hesitate, Mr. Hansom, to openly say that he burned the pretty church which the village was so proud of, and which William Seebold built and gave to the people for their own. But why could he have done it? why? One answer always occurs to me, and that is to destroy the records, for they were lost. But if he has proof, as Barley says, that Colonel Ray was married before, of what use?"

"He has no proof," exclaimed Mr. Hansom angrily, "he can find none, sir. Richard Ray I knew well; he loved the world, but not the bad side of it: all was honor, sir, the fairest honor with him. If he did a wrong he righted it, but he did few of them, and slight ones too. He loved Mary Seebold, sir, and if you had

known her you would never wonder, never, that he did. Did you never meet a woman who seemed to you so pure, so good, so above you in all things, that you were small beside her, sir; small in soul and heart, I mean? Did you ever, Mr. Thump; did you ever, sir?" And the elderly gentleman leaned towards the lawyer, fixed his keen eyes searchingly upon him and awaited his reply.

"Yes," it came at last warmly—"yes I have, sir, and can well understand how Colonel Ray, or plain Richard Ray he was then, worshipped, as you and all the village say he did, Mary Seebold. But this proof, if Marplot brings it forward, we must be ready to meet."

"I will meet it, sir, and him too, with Owlie and the dog. I should like to meet him and it. Let me know, sir, when he puts it forward, let me know. If you cannot find me, let Isaac Harold know. Blue Bottle Court, No. 4, you remember?"

"Yes, I know the place; I passed it yesterday. Here," said Mr. Thump, bringing forth another paper, "is the right I have from the magistrate of Quelton to enter Ivandale in the name of my client, if I only knew who it is. It is not a dishonorable advantage to take, I think, of the magistrate's ignorance. His right to do this might be contested in court, for our client, thus far, is a myth. But I find the case desperate to keep Marplot from a share in the whole, or part of which I know is not his. Now, I find that Jonas Barclay held the papers of Major Ray and the keys of Ivandale. The major became suspicious in his last days of every one but the old servant. He made a will and deposited it with the town authorities, withdrew it, and consigned it to the care of Barclay, who was to give it to Lord Radnor—a strange thing to do, but the major was whimsical, very, and child-like, so I reason that Ivandale must hold papers we need. Who will find them? The keys Jonas gave to his daughter, and she left Wenham long ago. All this I learned from the old magistrate who gave the official proof of Radnor's death. If the keys can be found we enter Ivandale. Have you a trusty man to do it?"

"None with a steadier hand, truer heart, and cooler

head can be found, sir, than we can command; eh, Owlie? How you glitter, glisten, glow, and burn!"

"A man must have courage, even with key in hand, to enter its portals. It makes me cold now to think of its awful stillness and gloom," said Mr. Thump with a shrug of the shoulders.

"We can command, we can, sir, a man with courage. I will let him have that dog, sir, and if he needs anything more save plenty of food and warm clothes to face the goblins that grin and grimace, then let me know. They always fade, melt, slink away, sir, before an honest man; and pray where would they be before an honest man and a faithful dog, sir, tell me that? No, no, let me get the keys, and we will waste no time in finding courage for their use."

"That is a relief, Mr. Hansom, truly, for I cannot well spare the time; you are too much in years; your friend, Isaac Harold, has not the strength, I know, for the undertaking. Poor little fellow, he has a shadow on his heart, I know, despite his merriment, and the mendicant at the corner of Lunley and the Wilton, who seems to have your interest at heart, is sightless," and Mr. Thump raised his eyebrows and after them his eyes; the latter met Mr. Hansom, but the look of query was greeted with indifference, but was it unrecognized?

"One thing more," he added after a pause. "From Quelton I took horse to Wenham again, where I found out what I last told you, when my acquaintance with the old magistrate grew from formal to social; and besides believing Marplot an incendiary they whisper of darker deeds. The only one left to bear the name of Ray was a child of Major Ray's brother, a little older than our client must be. She has disappeared and suspicion points her finger, but there is not a shadow of proof."

"Her name, sir; tell me quickly her name."

'Maria."

"Yes, the same one I told you of as the one who stood between him and fortune, sir."

"Yes, I remember that well, but there is no clue that Marplot has had the least possible way of reaching her;

no one has been to see her that is known of—no letter received. I have looked it well over, Mr. Hansom."

"Have you looked that over? Ha! tell me now about chance? Yes, sir, where is chance now? would chance put that in my hands? Ha, sir, tell me," and with trembling voice, shaking hand, and starting eye, was held before the astonished lawyer a paper which was drawn from a deep pocket in the dark yellow lining of the velvet cape. It was wrinkled, shrivelled, bleared and blistered by the river, which sorrowed that it must hold it and the one who carried it.

Mr. Thump opened it, made out here and there a word, and came to the signature S. S. Trout. The paper fell from his hand, and had it not lodged on his knee might have been broken; for if it had struck the ground, so stiff and crackling was it, the probabilities were greater that it would have gone to pieces, than the possibilities were of its preservation.

For a moment he could not speak, but when astonishment was a little mastered, he stammered forth, "I cannot, I surely cannot believe that, Mr. Hansom," and taking up the paper with a look of horror as he again gazed upon his partner's name, continued, "He is shrewd, avaricious, an egotist, but not a criminal; I cannot think that. He is tender-hearted ofttimes when I least look for it. He could not do this—no, not this. Some one else may, but not Mr. Trout, surely. I see by the look of the paper it has been in the water; was it found on the pretty girl we buried? can it be she was his victim? If so I am ready to hound him to the wall. What fair girl is safe if she was not?" and a look of distress fell over the lawyer's face. "It makes me heart-sick, but I do not see why it should, either," he added passing his hand across his brow, "I do not see why it should, there is no other in his way."

"We do not know, Mr. Thump, if there is, what might become of the innocent thing. He is sly, so sly you never know where, or how he finds out what he knows. And is he poor? no, sir, no. We know, Owlie, eh? what we speak of when we say he has gold, the real yellow ringing gold, laid by—hid, sir, hid in the dirty

dingy hole he lives in at Poorly's Resort. And gold will buy tell-tales—he offered a hundred pounds for that and these, sir, a hundred pounds—is that the offer of a poor man?" and as he spoke Mr. Hansom pointed to the paper in the lawyer's hand, and from under his cloak brought forth the rest of those that had so long been in Gaff's ample pocket. "Let me read them to you, then I will tell you, sir, how I got them. Look, Owlie; glitter, glisten, glow, and burn. Light me, light me."

The elder read what the reader heard Mr. Wallace and Isaac decipher; the younger listened. The other letters were of a private nature, and of only so much interest to the reader as to give him the assurance that they would but serve to strengthen the hold they were gaining upon Marplot by identifying beyond doubt the body as that of Maria Ray. When he had finished, Mr. Hansom with exultation recounted the way in which these had been secured by Mr. Wallace, and added, "Where now is chance, sir? I was ready for them, and they were given me; not chanced into my keeping, but were given me, sir; given me."

"Can I have seen this Mr. Wallace, I wonder?" asked the lawyer after he had weighed well with the other the evidence found and both had decided to trap their game as speedily as possible, lest he might harm them more—"Leave a bit of slime that we might slip on, sir," as Mr. Hansom put it.

"It might be," returned the latter in reply to Mr. Thump's query, "he goes to Isaac Harold's; he is a faithful, sir, a faithful, true man."

"Oh yes, he must be the one whom I saw in Blue Bottle Court a few mornings ago. He spoke of you, sir, and he is the one who got possession of the papers. Why, see here, see here, Mr. Hansom," exclaimed Mr. Thump, suddenly looking up and ceasing the tapping of his fingers on the table, "I saw him months ago; he called upon Mr. Trout."

"Yes, I sent him; he has called since too, sir, while you were away. That is how I know what is planned. The blind man called on him yesterday; yes, I sent him, sir, sent him. Would Mr. Hansom go himself? Ah, no,

sir, no; why I can tell you just what your partner will do, sir, if he can. Now, it is to be seen which is the better man, he or Marplot. If we get the latter, sir, the former will run; if we get the former, sir, the latter will win."

"But I must convince myself, perfectly, that this is the writing of Mr. Trout," and the young partner of the once crafty and cunning, began assorting the papers before him and selected that signed S. S. Trout. "I will not do him a wrong for the world. He has always been kind and considerate of my faults and infirmities, and I am inclined to feel so for his, although I must admit he is dishonest, dishonorable, but, as I said before, not a criminal I am sure; see here, I have it, Mr. Hansom. Let us go to my office and compare this closely with his own handwriting. It may be, and I hope it will be, that here is another grip on Marplot. Mr. Trout will be out after four o'clock," he added as he saw some hesitancy on the part of Mr. Hansom to comply; "it is now that hour, and the way there is not a short one. Besides, I have something there that may aid me, too."

"What say you, Owlie, shall we go? Yes, sir, yes, she glistened, we will go. Take these papers, sir; I do not want them with me. If we have an adviser, you know, he must take care of our documents," and Mr. Hansom swept the piles and packages toward the lawyer, drew his cloak about him, took up his hat, adjusted the curls and the beard, smoothed the bird, put the silver whistle to his lips and blew a soft low note. The dog still exactly as he had first placed himself, relaxed in hearing and muscle, stood up, shook off the weariness of one attitude for so long, and leaped into the room. "Good Rover, good dog!" said his master with a pat, "you did well, sir, well; now for some meat—ask the mistress below stairs. Be a good fellow, and I will come back for you."

Rover licked and lapped the hand, the seal ring with its sunken crest, patted the cloak, cast admiring glances at the golden bird—for one of which, dearie, in Blue Bottle Court, would have fluttered and flustered a week after—and betook himself below: the master and his adviser soon followed. The fly, the horse, the driver were without; the last had been bidden to await

for further orders; and so grateful were the three to the man who had made their one "wenture" in life a successful one, though it came late, that they would have waited till time crumbled them to atoms before they would disobey his commands.

"We will ride—yes, sir, you and Owlie and myself. Nothing like one's own vehicle at hand, if it be only a fly, sir," laughed Mr. Hansom as they got in. The driver took the order—"to Lunley Lane," closed the door with a swing and a bang as if it were as strong as the gate of a fortress, took the ribbons in his hand, and the dog with a longing look watched their departure.

On the way Mr. Hansom recounted the finding of Tom Barley and the news he had gleaned from him when he began to awake. It differed not much from what Mr. Thump had learned from the same source, save that he found Mr. Barley meant to visit Ivandale in the interest of Trout, thus acting for him and Marplot together and separately.

The horse did not jerk his way now. His hoofs had been hardened when Mr. Hansom had him sent to the veterinarian for general repairs, with as many particular ones as were consistent with his present age and past deprivations. Besides brightening all over, the animal found hoofs and wind much improved. The former he could use firmly and surely, the latter he was not in danger of losing so readily as he had been. The journey, therefore, to the office of Mr. Thump, was not so long as might have been expected.

The clerk was alone. He recognized Mr. Hansom, but had the good sense not to obtrude upon that gentleman with the expression of gratitude that was in his heart and on his lips. They gained the private office, sat down, and Mr. Thump began at once comparing the S. S. Trout of the paper with the S. S. Trout they knew to be his own chirography.

"It is like when I hold it so, exactly," said Mr. Thump, "and when I hold it so, I see it is not," and he put them both upon the right and then upon the left. But the more he looked the more he grew puzzled and the greater the fear in his heart that it was genuine.

Mr. Hansom ventured no opinion. He leaned back upon the same leather-covered chair that he had occupied upon his last visit to Mr. Thump's cozy quarters. He had more leisure time now to spend upon his attire, or rather its arranging and rearranging; this he did with now and then a pat of the bird and a holding her nearer the name, as if she might throw some light.

The outer door opened softly, but the clerk who was not so drowsy now, heard it and looked up into a face not much older than his own in years, but a lifetime older in wickedness.

"Mr. Trout? now, Mr. Trout?" and the visitor advanced with a supercilious air towards the clerk, who not liking, at a glance, the fellow, and anxious to make speedy work with his errand, took what he held, a letter, and tapped at the door of Mr. Thump's room.

"Come in, come in."

"For Mr. Trout, sir," and it was handed to the partner of that gentleman.

"Say to the bearer, that Mr. Trout is not in, and I cannot say when he will be, but that the letter will be safe with me until he comes." The clerk took the message without and soon returned.

"The young man who brought it, sir, says he will take the letter back, as he had orders not to leave it unless Mr. Trout was in," was the message brought back by the same clerk in the same methodical manner in which the previous one had been taken out.

Mr. Hansom just then leaned so far forward upon the owl and the cane, as if in the act of bringing himself on his feet preparatory to putting in motion his legs, that it brought the letter quite under his nose, and age in his case not having taken any of the liberties it often does with the eyes of those who are on the other side of the hill, he could see as clearly and as far as in youth, so he caught quickly the address, "S. S. Trout, Esq., Lunley Lane." The lawyer caught at the same time the peculiar cramp and slant of the letters and the slight greasy track which had been left by the hand as it passed over the paper, and held it close to the signature before him. The T, the S were the same; the effort to copy was

plain. The elderly gentleman having thrown off his cloak, now fumbled about his curls, his collar, his broad silken watch-guard that went around his neck and was stayed by a gold slide, and trying to appear disinterested before the clerk, sat back again in the leather-cushioned chair and looked at the law-books upon the right flank.

"Who brings this?" asked the lawyer still holding the letter and taking in well again the slant, the cramp, and general style of the address.

"A young man, sir, not an office-boy either ; a man that's too smartly dressed for that," returned the clerk. "Striped breeches, plaid coat, red necktie, with stand-up dickey, soiled linen, low shoes, dusty stockings, high hat on one side, blear eyes that wink, or one that winks knowingly at you, says everything as if he were biting at his words."

"That will do," returned Mr. Thump, "hand this to him without comment, but if he says aught to you, give it me at once."

The curtained door closed, and soon the outer one was heard to follow its example.

"That is from Marplot, sir, from Marplot; how lucky we came. Is it chance now ?" said Mr. Hansom leaving the law-books in the rear. "You must make a point of that."

"Yes, sir, at once. You must excuse me, I shall have occasion to stroll leisurely the same way this young man does just now," and the lawyer arose, put on his hat, took a light cane, drew on a pair of gloves, and gave himself the air of one who was looking about London for pleasure, with no particular aim and no particular desire to have one. "You will see that I am obliged to make haste, Mr. Hansom."

"And I will follow slowly in the fly, sir," returned the other, fastening at the throat the heavy cloak with its embossed lion's claw and eagle's beak. "Owlie and I, sir, will keep well behind and take you in any time, sir. You have no scruples now, I hope. I forgot to ask you about them, we had so many things to ask. Where are the scruples, Mr. Lawyer, where ?"

"Gone, gone," came from Mr. Thump as he hurried

out; "gone, when so much needs righting. Good day, good day."

Mr. Thump hurried out and down, but there the hurry ceased. The young man with the red necktie and stand-up dicky was also in no hurry, so he had not by that time got beyond the boundary of the Lane. He sauntered and gazed; Mr. Thump did the same, but at a very respectful distance. He turned to the Wilton and looked up, then down; a passer-by jostled him, and he turned resentfully, while his face rivalled in an instant his tie in color, but the passer-by either did not notice him, or thought him not worth the notice, for upon the resentful turning there was no one to combat.

"He is quick tempered," said Mr. Thump. He did not wait for another jostling, but took his way down the Wilton till he came to the corner of Cheatem Street. Here he halted and looked in to that small thoroughfare as if he was familiar with it and also with somebody who dwelt therein. Not finding the somebody to come forth even to the corner to greet him, he walked on. After the halt had been short, and after several squares of sauntering and gazing he drew forth a silver watch of generous size and dirt-dimmed case; this he consulted and then hurried on. Mr. Thump now did the same.

"He is to meet somebody or something," said that gentleman again to himself.

Off the Wilton soon and down Helpmeet Street till he reached a covered way between two dingy old warehouses, that had stood in the smoke and fog of London till not one trace of their original color remained.

"Ha," again said the lawyer, "I know where that leads to, for many a time I have run through there when I was a boy and when Meg was—a—a—girl." His face flushed, but his pace never slackened. "It is a short cut to Flood Street. It will never do to follow him through there, but I can hurry around the travelled way and be as far behind as I ought."

The covered way led, as Mr. Thump said, to Flood Street; down this went the red tie and stand-up dicky till Wreckers Court was neared. Here he paused and looked anxiously into the court and all about, but saw not what

he had come for, for he muttered, "Fooled, knew it—fourth time—tide high—no go that—always fooled—look again," and he strolled down where Snatcher lay at her ease in full water, along the shore a little, when he suddenly wheeled and made his way back into the face of Mr. Thump, who was not looking for this move. However, the wearer of the tie and dicky had no suspicion who he was, and kept on till he reached Mayfair; and when the turn from that into Blue Bottle Court came, he took it and took himself up to the last house at the end and disappeared in the doorway with as much freedom and familiarity as if he had often been there before. It was at an hour of the day when there were many passers, and so his follower was not noticed by his footsteps. Having seen him thus far, Mr. Thump turned to consult Mr. Hansom, who was not far behind in the fly.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

MISS RAY BECOMES EASILY CONVINCED THAT IT IS QUITE THE MORNING FOR A RIDE.

THE rosette was still full and unrumpled; its pearl buckle heart was undimmed; the tiny kid slipper that bore them both knew that it was wearing away the two-ply when it patted upon it impatiently or affectedly, and it also knew it was gaining a firm hold on the heart of its mistress's admirer. So, of course, lest it should look worn and rusty, it was laid carefully by and only put on when Zeke tapped, opened, bowed, presented the card of S. S. Trout, grinned and sometimes said to himself as he danced off the landing and by sundry catches at the railing and headlong plunges at the wall till he got equilibrium, which was not far from the bottom step, "Je-rusalem, ain't she pretty this mornin'."

All of the above he did a few mornings after the blind man had had audience with the once crafty and

cunning Trout, who had been frequent in his calls upon Miss Ray, and not ungenerous in his remittances, although he professed that a friend furnished him with them for her. "The same one," she would ask, "to whom I am indebted for finding me?" The reply was either a quiet affirmation or an evasive and unsatisfactory one. But it did not touch Miss Ray's pride to live upon the bounty of anyone known or unknown. She was pretty she knew; there was a daintiness, a sweetness, a charm about her that was fascinating without being loving. The refinement was natural, it was so thoroughly a part of herself that it never could have been acquired. She had no heart, because she had no particular use for one. She had been taken to America when she was very young, and had been provided for in a meagre sort of way by somebody, being always told that she was an inheritor of estates in England; so, although she did not afterwards tell Mr. Trout, she was not surprised when the summons came, but found herself repeatedly saying, "Can it be true?" when she handled a supply of money sufficient to pay her passage to England and leave ample for, to her, a most complete outfit of things needful and ornamental.

Thus equipped she crossed the sea; and what young woman would not? This London solicitor had even written to the captain of the steamer on which he had told her to sail, implying that her possessions would soon be vast and attention to her personal comfort would be in future rewarded. This was unnecessary, for captain, officers, passengers, and crew were alike pleased with her pretty face, soft, insinuating manners, and paid her tribute accordingly. However, her voyage had not been quite comfortable, for there was somebody aboard who charmed and chilled her, a woman whose face stirred up in the heart of the girl memories so illy defined that she could not make them plain enough to decide whence or how they sprung. When the vessel landed, this woman was gone; when the railway coach halted in London and Miss Ray alighted, she was not there; when the cab drew up before No. 40 Chapel Street, she looked to see her bid welcome, but Zeke appeared, Mrs. Mutter followed.

The dread of seeing that face had kept her close within doors, and on account of this seclusion Mr. Trout had not found it necessary to remunerate the blind man for service at the corner of Chapel Street.

On this particular morning Miss Ray sat before the mirror, whose reflective and refractive powers were still awry, yet it always did its best for her,—the fact was the little bit of illy moulded and imperfectly foiled glass was fond of her; for she had never threatened to smash it as a homelier-faced woman would have done; she only laughed at its contortions and said to it now and then, "What a sham you are for a mirror;" so she sat before it and looked and talked. Let us listen.

"He's been here often, but upon the estate's affairs only twice. Let me see," and she patted her pretty foot; it had on an old kid shoe now, for the slipper was not sure he would call so early and was resting, recruiting strength for renewed attacks upon the two-ply, and at the same time a patting upon and luring over of the heart of one who would soon tread softly and stealthily the same two-ply—"let me see; the last time we talked about what I was to do he retreated in confusion under my most positive statement that I was nearing twenty-two and my mother had wicked eyes. Since then, I think he has intended many times to tell me what I was to say, but truth is, truth is—ah, ah, he's just the right age, well, yes," and she nodded to her face in the mirror. "I really do not see why not. This estate is either in the hands of somebody who is slow or else who is not sure. Much of both, I fancy, and more of the latter; yes, I think I will, ah, ah! I am not made for work; I am made to be petted and praised and provided for," and she tossed off the old shoe, and was just putting her dainty toes into the slippers, when, tap, tap.

It was Zeke, with a card, who ventured in a whisper as he looked admiringly at her, "'E's hawful smartened hin 'is ways this mornin'," and closed the door.

Miss Ray was energetic to that extent that if she wanted a pretty garment, or rather a garment to make her look still prettier, and could not pay her mantua-maker for its make-up, she did what was a characteristic

of the people she had so long dwelt among across the Atlantic—she made it herself; so after the slippers were well upon the feet, a daintily ruffled ruby-colored morning dress was soon well upon her shoulders. It was nondescript, with its tucks here, plaits there, and gathers all around. She knew what suited her, and she had so made it. The blue ribbons capped it like a crown upon a queen, and if Mr. Trout had a wavering of determination as to his course in this matter, as to his duty—the blind man had so called it—regarding the protection of this innocent little creature, it vanished when she entered the room all smiles and welcomes, blushes and charms. She gave him her hand; he took it, bowed low over it, pressed it to his lips, withdrew it, pressed it again, still holding it looked up into her face, smiled not so blandly as sickly—he meant it for loving—shook his head slowly, and—either because his heart was too full to allow of his speaking or because tending toward the portly he was quite out of breath—without saying a word, led her to a seat and placed himself beside her, and, when respiration was in a measure restored to its even tenor, he suddenly let go of the great seal which the other hand was all the while grasping, as if for courage and strength from its massiveness, and it actually stole with its arm following closely about her waist. She sat down—displeased? Oh, no, she had been looking for something of the kind for many weeks, but she did not of course know the precise form it would appear in—whether of the purely sentimental and sighing, the more formal and business-like, or with a tinge of both; so, while putting on the air of innocence, trembling, bowing abashed, eyes on the ground—or it might be on the pretty rosette, for it was peeping forth—hands toying with a silken tassel nervously—and at the same time noting the match it was for the stuff of the dress—this was the first time she had worn it—and waited.

"It is a pleasant morning, Miss Ray," and the arm about her waist tightened a little, a very little, while the hand that held hers let go and sought the imaginary bit of dust upon the lustrous broadcloth over the knee, —not the bit, not the knee, but the broadcloth—which

by the way, the lady saw was new, entirely new. This discovery, with the almost imperceptible squeeze at the waist, agreed so well that she did not mind the very common and out-of-place remark upon the weather.

"Is it?" she simpered "I—yes—well, I don't know, I suppose it is though."

"Very, and bright, too," was again ventured by the smiling Trout, with a decided closing in of the arm this time and a drawing nearer every way.

"It looks so, indeed," whispered the lady while the slipper patted nervously and the tassel was none the less energetic.

"Quite the morning for a ride—" He stopped short, it was evident he had not said what he meant to, or else meant to say more, for that simple statement was quite as void as one of his blandest smiles.

To this Miss Ray volunteered no acquiescence in words, but in manner—oh! it was so charmingly confused and so confusingly charming that he took more breath, more heart—or rather courage—and letting go pursuit after the dust-bit ventured with the rising inflection—"to a church?" as he took again her hand.

She did not withdraw it, and it trembled a little, just enough to let him know she mistrusted why a ride to church would be quite the thing on that morning—no, that that morning was quite the thing for a ride to a church; so as she could not speak she sighed, he sighed, gave her waist a very, very decided pressure this time, so much so that her head leaned towards his shoulder—if a flower is bent at its stem it droops.

"You could go in Miss—Miss Ray," he tried to murmur it, but his shortness of breath and general nervousness made it more like a hoarse, jerky whisper, "and—and come out Mrs.—Mrs. Trout, you know." Frightened at his daring, and so immensely relieved that he had dared, he abruptly dropped her hand again and seized the seal and the fob-chain, then realizing that he had done quite the wrong thing at the wrong time, he thought to make it seem that he had done the right thing at the right time and pulled out a massive time-keeper, as if he was due with Miss Ray at the church at

some stated moment and he was timing himself to see how much more pressing of the waist and holding of the hand could be done and yet keep the appointment.

'Pon honor it had been but five minutes since Miss Ray had entered the room and the case had already gone to the jury, so quickly, so expeditiously had he conducted proceedings, and he had allowed himself half an hour for argument and half an hour for preparation on the part of Miss Ray for the suitable arranging of her dress for the proposed visit; so, with full twenty-five minutes margin, he gave himself up to the delight of touching once more the dainty fingers, closing in more upon the slender waist and—and—oh, Trout! oh, wily Trout! whoever thought to write it—listening to the sighing and whispering. The sighing was supposed to come from the depths of a very loving heart, but its origin was not far from a pair of lovely lips from which also the whispering came as the flower completely broken at the stem let its head drop upon Mr. Trout's shoulder, but with such a nicety of aim that the white morning collar was not turned at the corners, that the silver barb was not thrust out of place, that the pretty coil of wavy hair was not in the least danger of being rendered unsymmetrical, that the trained curls at the side were all that moved, and they freed themselves just at the right time—they fell upon the lustrous broadcloth shoulder; and Mr. Trout was nearer heaven when they fell and a few moments after, than we fear he will be again for a long time to come.

But let us return to the sighing and whispering. The former continued for some little time, and then fearing Mr. Trout was contemplating—or it might be going to do it without contemplating—resting his round, shiny head against hers, and thus actually threatening the top of the pretty coil, the latter thought it time to be heard, and so the head was raised and the pretty cold eyes turned full upon the small twinkling orbs of the once crafty and cunning lawyer. As the lips moved he bent to listen; but she had the advantage—the barb and coil were in the background, safe from intrusion—for his ear must come the nearest to her now, of course, as he

was to hear her whisper, "It would be so charming and select."

"We know each other so well, dear," and the little hand was raised to the bland mouth before the word "dear" was quite finished. It sounded so strangely to Mr. Trout to hear it himself, that he did not give it full tone, but checked it off with a kiss upon the finger tips.

"Yes," simpered Miss Ray holding up her head and at once seeking the coil, the barb, the curls, to see that they had played their part as well as she had hers, "of course we do—so well—and the church?"

"I know of one open at twelve." Five minutes more having elapsed since Mr. Trout last looked, he noted now only twenty on the margin, so he said without seeming in a hurry, "It is now twenty minutes before eleven. That gives us ample time, I believe," he added with the most business-like precision, "I have omitted nothing." He drew a tiny box from his waistcoat pocket and smiled with meaning for once, as he looked at her wedding finger. As the box disappeared, a paper peeped out just enough to show that the civil awaited the sanction of the clerical. "A hansom is just around the corner; I thought it would save so many eyes from peering and straining themselves blind. How fortunate we have been, indeed, not to be intruded upon; I have never liked that door," and he pointed to the same one behind which Mrs. Mutter and Mrs. Crowfoot had once stationed themselves.

"But the landlady is out buying for dinner, and the second-floor front can't walk—rheumatism; so I did not feel anxious," laughed Miss Ray. "Only the applicants were to be dreaded."

"I was the only applicant this morning, fortunately," smiled Mr. Trout rubbing again the shiny knee, "and I hope I secured the only vacancy in your heart; none before me, dear?" This time the "dear" came without the choking, although the look was a little hang-down.

"Yes, yes," sighed Miss Ray, "nobody so worthy as —what shall I call you?"

"My first, my surname?"

"Yes, you call me Margaret, and I must call you—"

"My name is Selwyn Sellers Trout," replied the owner of the euphoneous title.

"Then, I will call you Sell, ha, ha!" she laughed so daintily, and as she arose patted him upon the shoulder very much as one would pat a dog for the purpose of conciliating him, not for the real love of caressing him. "Now I will make ready, if you will excuse me a few moments, and I will leave you in the good and consoling company of dear Mr. Mutter," and she pointed to the portrait of that most worthy and considerably deceased individual.

The door closed; he heard her, or he thought he did, ha, ha! very softly as she tripped up the stairs to the second floor end room. There let us follow.

The slippers had done their work for that day at least, a pair of highly cut, snugly fitting boots superseded them, the ruby-colored morning dress was displaced for a gray street attire of silk and serge, so artistically united, mingled and matched that it was plainly the work of its wearer, as was also the charming little bonnet not of the serge but the silk, with ribbon and plume to match and flowers to contrast; the lace at the throat was soft though not antique, it was becoming though not woven to order; the gloves fitted to perfection. The mirror had never in all its troubled, worried life come so near reflecting anything so correctly as it did the pretty face and figure of the bride elect upon that bright morning. A mantle thrown over her arm to protect her against the frost of the air or the dampness of the church, and Miss Ray appeared before her enchanted lover.

Meantime he had been stealthily treading up and down upon the two-ply, now and then passing his hand across his eyes as if to awaken himself or satisfy himself that he was awake. He was about to wed a young lady whom he loved as much as he could anybody. She was not the beyond-doubt-established-and-rightful heiress to Ivandale, but he could easily make her so. The facilities for training her to a part were not the most satisfactory in the public room of a lodging-house, so he was about to do quite the best thing that he could do, and he surveyed himself in the gilt-framed glass that hung upon

one side of the room : his boots were new, glove fitting, well polished ; his fob-chain had been duly chamoied by the jeweller, and it with the great seal dangled proudly over the well cut, well made broadcloth that incased him from hip to heel ; the coat, the waistcoat were suited to the latter in style and texture ; the linen was spotless, glossy; the tie was white, about this he had studied much. He had consulted books, but he dare not consult persons. He knew a full dress demanded it, but about so private an affair he could not determine till he saw it around the rather broad standing-up dicky, and finding it becoming, his vanity dictated the wearing of it. His hat was silk, a little wide in the brim and quite tall in the body. His head had been well rubbed, the crown, that is, with the silk pad. In short, Mr. Trout, as he drew over his soft white hands a pair of gloves of fine pliable fabric, considered himself a most perfectly arrayed bridegroom. Like Miss Ray he threw over his arm an outer covering, to which he added hers, and thus arrayed they stepped out of No. 40 without the knowledge of Mrs. Mutter, without the gaze of Mrs. Crowfoot, but not without a peep from Zeke behind the door of a room at the end of the passage, who immediately carried his suspicions to Mary Ann, and that good creature to satisfy the "b'y's longin' to know too much," agreed to rub the knives and forks for him while he ran out by the rear entrance and watched, not that by so doing her curiosity was one bit appeased, oh, no !

The hansom was there ; the driver dismounted, the door was opened, Miss Ray and Mr. Trout entered and were driven to a church, the morning was so bright for such a ride.

Strange to say, the minister of the church was there, the beadle was there, but no one else was there, and both seemed awaiting something, somebody.

"We are fortunate," said Mr. Trout with his blandest smile as they alighted.

The minister took his place, the bridal pair took theirs, but where were the witnesses ? Who was to give the bride away ? Mr. Trout thought he had forgotten nothing, and yet he had, so the giving away lay between

the driver of the hansom and the beadle. Miss Ray not being quite pleased with the selectness of the affair made the best of it, however, and chose the beadle. The responses were given, the ring given to the priest, from the priest to the groom, and by him placed upon the finger of the bride. The contract was signed, witnessed by the driver and the beadle, and she who had entered as Miss Margaret Ray passed out Mrs. Selwyn Sellers Trout.

CHAPTER XL.

SIR JAMES LAMBERT APPEARS, TO THE DELIGHT OF THE LITTLE MAN.

THE cough was feebler as the weather grew colder, but it was none the less painful. The ten-pound note had brought to the sufferer cordials to soothe and coals to warm, although as to the latter, Miss Thump had not allowed the supply to run out, but there was a feeling of independence in buying for herself which the woman enjoyed. She had not been so poor long, and her only child left from a goodly-sized family, was not one who found the Blue Bottle Court at all to his taste or breeding. The husband and father had not been long from their hourly care. He was once a sturdy, strong-limbed man, and in his strength defied aught to harm him. But the challenge came in an unlooked-for moment. He was a mechanic of skill, and had not so much to depend upon his hands for ample wages, as upon his head, for he was master in his trade, a general overlooker and manager of many. He was daring, and the building was only a shell; its frame had but just been reared from the ground, when he climbed, despite remonstrance, to see what was wrong in the joining of two beams: he reached them just as they concluded to part company entirely; they fell, taking him with them. From that hour the mother and son nursed him tenderly, patiently, till his

soul climbed to a mansion that was reared for him before the world had been called into existence, whose beams are joined by the rivets of a good Father's love ; whose frame can never fall, for it is upheld by strength that eternity cannot weaken. His earnings, carefully invested, had little by little dwindled away ; and when he was about to bid them farewell, he stretched out his hands, while his lips moved as if imploring the aid of the unseen for these his wife and child that he must leave penniless, and, if the landlord was not a tender-hearted man, soon to be homeless. The woman had never been robust, and she had never been a heavy worker, for the arm that she had leaned upon was strong, and the heart that she had trusted was kind and generous, so the work was done by others. When left alone with her boy she was forced to do what she could for their bread. As each quarter's rent was paid a poorer lodging was sought for ; as the cough, with its sting through the breast came, less labor was performed, less money was earned. So, at last, Blue Bottle's poor lodging-house found her and her boy who could not get work that was constant, nor pay that was good—and soon after this Miss Thump found them. The son, as we already know, soon had a seat upon the clerk's stool in the office of Trout & Thump. Clothes he needed for the sake of respectability, and these the mother made him buy with his first pay ; so with what he had earned since, with what Miss Thump, Miss Hamper and Meg brought, she was in no great need, but still lacking many things that as an invalid she longed but would not ask for ; some of these the ten-pound note, laid in her lap by Mr. Hansom, had bought. There was something besides the love of her boy that held her to earth, and ever since Mr. Hansom's visit she had listened and longed for its repetition. She knew though her strength was failing that the hour of her departure was not near, for her work was not done, her trust had not been delivered.

She was pillowed in a chair with her feet upon a cushion of Meg's make, and Meg herself sat near. She had been reading to her ; now she was talking. They both heard a strange foot-fall upon the stairs, and listened.

It came near the door, stopped, then passed on up to the next flight and to the room occupied by the woman to whom Meg was carrying breakfast upon the morning when the wind played hide, and then went to seek Isaac and his cloak—the woman who had moved from Wreckers Court—the woman who did not like to look at young girls. There was a peculiar and somewhat lengthy tapping upon the door. Thrice the visitor's fingers struck gently the frail panel; a pause, twice they struck—another pause—once, and the voice from within said, "Come in."

"I do not like that step or that man," said Meg, after they had heard this, and looked at each other questioningly. "He used to come to Wreckers to see her. I always went away when he came."

"What does he look like?" asked the woman with some display of curiosity.

"I never look at him," returned the girl, with an expression on her face as if the thought brought repulsion, "I only feel that he is bad. Yes, I did look at him once, the first time I ever saw him come; but I have never looked since. He is bad, bad, I know, and I am afraid she is not very good. I do not like to say so, but I feel it. She says she does not like to see young folks near her, and that does not seem right, do you think so?"

"No, no, there must be something wrong there; but dear, never mind," said the woman softly, as she saw the sadness in Meg's eyes, "do not take it so to heart; you are not to blame. Hark! I hear a step. Yes, I do; and a cane. Yes, yes; maybe it is the old gentleman with the gray curls; he had a cane. I do want to see him, if it is only"—she had not finished, when the cane, the step stopped at her door—tap, tap, in a cheery way, and Meg arose, and before her hand had reached the latch, she stood face to face with John Hansom.

He looked up, and over his features swept light and shadow so rapidly, that Meg, in thinking of him afterward, could not tell which he seemed the most fascinating in, the shade or the shine, for charmed with him she was at once, and put out her hand saying, "This is good Mr. Hansom, I know; may I not shake hands with him?"

"And this is Miss Meg the charitable," he returned with some effort to speak as he put out from under the velvet cape his right hand with its crested ring. "I have often heard of your kind deeds, and am most honored in greeting you," he continued as he took her little hand, held it still for a few seconds, and put it softly down at her side as if it were lifeless. A chill crept over her, not of dread, for it left peace; not of horror, for at once her heart was aglow.

He did not wait for her to reply, but turned at once to the invalid and said, "How are you, ma'm, to day? Better, it is to be hoped."

"Much better, thank you," was the pleasant reply, "for the luxuries your generous gift provided. How shall I thank you, sir, for it, and to a stranger, too? Surely heaven sent you, and sent, too, the good people who have cared so generously for me. And this one," she pointed to Meg, "I call my good angel. She is nothing short."

"I have no doubt of it, ma'm," said Mr. Hansom without venturing a look towards the young girl, who was busying herself about the room, "I have not, indeed, for I know there are such things as angels on earth."

"And I shall call you one too," came from the thin, colorless lips while a bright light shone in the eyes, "for you are such."

"No, no, I am not, indeed, ma'm, you will find me far from that. I have a bird here," and Mr. Hansom turned the subject, "a pet bird, who always likes to be in the light, and I am sure you won't mind, ma'm, if I put her where she can see. You may laugh, ma'm, but you can't tell what a world of comfort I have taken with her. She knows so much, and sees so much. She has lighted me through many a dark way. She glitters, glistens, glows and burns, ma'm, as you would never think she could. Come, Owlie, come," and the hand that covered the golden bird was slid part way down the ebony cane. Meg looked, and the woman looked, and both smiled when they saw what had lighted so well its master and noted it as an eccentricity of the man who with all his oddity had a heart.

"Do you have a physician, ma'm?" he asked as much because the pause was somewhat awkward after he had displayed the bird, as anything else.

"No, no, there is no need of one," murmured the woman, lying back on the pillow, which Meg smoothed for her. "There is," she continued when she felt stronger, "but one thing, or rather, one person I do need, and if I could but find him it would make the end easier to bear, for I should feel that what I was to do had been done; and I have prayed, sir, that you might call again, for I thought, maybe, you might tell me of him. The gentry always know the gentry, and I beg pardon, sir, but you seem like some of the high folks I used to know," and she glanced at the embossed crest that held down the velvet collar of the velvet cloak, while that sunken upon the ring did not escape her.

"My life has taken me, ma'm, among all classes, and we cannot associate with folks long without becoming like them; so if I have the ways of the gentry, ma'm, I will say that I have been among them, it is true," and the elderly gentleman adjusted a mongrel curl which fell a little forward and might throw the rest out of place, too, if not put back. "If you feel faith in me, ma'm, I might say you may tell me the name of the one you would like to see, and I can tell you whether I know him, or can help to find him."

"His name," said the woman leaning forward with unnatural strength, "is James Lambert, Sir James Lambert. Do you know him? Can you find him? I have for him what can straighten the crooked and make him happy, if what I have always heard of him is true."

The hand that had slid down the ebony cane trembled a little, so the bird was not still, she fluttered, and her diamond eyes glittered and sparkled; the cloak was drawn a little by the other hand for the sake of giving it something to do; the throat was cleared once or twice with a suppressed ahem! the chin which would have quivered was so laden with the long beard that it could not, so the beard was just a little drawn up and then let down before Mr. Hansom's reply was ready, in a free and unmoved tone.

"I do know him, ma'm, and I can find him. When will you see him?"

"Is he in London?" almost cried the woman in her joy.

"He is, ma'm?"

"Let me see him as soon as you can find him, or something might happen and it would be too late. When can you bring him? By seven to-night? Can you, sir?" and exhausted by this effort she lay back again, with Meg to soothe, and Meg to rest her.

"I can, ma'm, but do not get excited, and lest you might overdo, I will go, and let you rest. Would you know him, let me ask first, would you know him, ma'm?"

"Yes," she replied, "I saw him once, and I have heard him so often described that I can almost see him now."

"Then you would be sure, ma'm, that he was no imposter, that is all I ask for? I will go now and leave you again all I have about me. Come, Owlie, come, we will go." And he threw into her lap what he could find in a pocket that was held by some garment beneath his cloak—crowns, half crowns, and shillings—he could not tell how much or how little.

"No thanks, none, if you please," he said as she began to speak, "Owlie will not like to hear them, so you will say nothing, ma'm. Is there anyone else here who is sick and needy, Miss Charitable?" he asked turning to Meg who stood by with wondering gaze.

"Yes, sir," she replied, "a woman up on the next floor; but there is a caller there just now, and I would not like to disturb her."

"Yes, yes, he came in before me. Ah! so he went there, Owlie, eh? I will see her the next time," he said, and with a low bow passed out.

Stump, stump, stump down the stairs, through the court, along Mayfair till he saw a fly creeping near, and into it, whose door was soon thrown open by the driver, Mr. Hansom passed, with the golden bird's diamond eyes to light as he seated himself beside Mr. Thump the adviser. And thus we see what had resulted from the latter's turning back to consult the elderly gentleman,

when he saw Ralph Speeder, for he it was, enter the last house at the end of Blue Bottle Court.

"Instinct again, sir; we talked about it once, you know, and you called it instinct. I didn't, because I can hear it sometimes, and one never hears instinct. Chance, then? No, sir, no, not chance; but whatever it is, it tells me that he has gone to the woman who says she would like a lawyer, the woman who is sick in the third flight, and that young man, sir, is Speeder, Ralph Speeder; and it bodes no good to the cause—his visit. So keep a look-out there, sir, and if there is testimony, get it, but not to-night, sir. I forbid it being taken to-night, to-morrow any time, but not to-night."

All this Mr. Hansom said between the efforts he made to get back the breath he seemed to have lost in the hurry of nearing and entering the fly. When somewhat rested, he continued, "I ran in to see the sick woman, the mother of your clerk. The first time I came to your office he was drowsy, sir, very, and I asked him what made him so. 'Mother sick,' he said, so I went to see, and found it true, sir, true. I found I could call again and see how she was, and I did, sir, I did, and found the young man was above stairs. What is doing all this? Chance? Instinct? Do either of them give me just what I am ready for, and when I am ready for it? No, sir, no. Now, mark me, just mark me right here. I shall have the keys of Ivandale when I have my man ready, which will be in time to take Cross-Bow coach to-morrow night, eh, Owlie?"

"I trust you may, Mr. Hansom, but I shall believe it a special interposition if you do, and shall then acknowledge something besides chance at work in this matter," said Mr. Thump as he alighted from the fly, for they were already on the Wilton, and he would not trouble them to take him nearer home. "I would like to see you to-morrow, for there is still a little matter I have not acquainted you with."

"Yes, yes, you will see me, and if not just when you want me call at Isaac Harold's, he will know where I am, sir—busy, busy times now. Good day, good day," and the advised shook warmly the adviser. The fly door

closed, the fly, the quadruped, and the driver looked in the direction of Jericho, but not long; they turned after a short distance and where they went the reader shall either be told or guess for himself hereafter.

The day was ending; the twilight—there was none in that part of London—so Meg, knowing the clerk would soon be home to his mother, put on her hood, her mantle, took her empty basket, and with the assurance that either herself or Mother Martha would come in the morning, bade the invalid good night, and hurried out of the court and along the ways that led to Wreckers; but from the moment she passed the one-storied dwelling of Isaac Harold she was not lost sight of by the Little Man till she stood within the door of Peleg Hamper's home.

Seven o'clock, and all Blue Bottle Court, with the green-grocer at one corner and the keeper of the tavern at the other thrown in, had never seen so stately, so elegant, so well-bred a personage as alighted from what seemed a private carriage, the gentleman's own, one would have said by the way he comported himself with its bewigged, bepowdered and liveried footman and driver, who in turn were awed by his presence and as little annoyed by the neighborhood into which they had been ordered as if they were obeying the whims of a royal master.

Walking haughtily but quickly along the court, he happened to strike his foot against the step that led to Isaac Harold's humble door, and, as if impatient either at his own heedlessness or the audacity of the step for being in the way of so important a man as himself, muttered something and looked up at the window beside the door.

The Little Man was there and saw him, but was not a bit awed at this greatness; he watched it enter the end house and then said to himself, "Ha, ha, ha! that is good, so good that I must straighten out, indeed I must." So down upon the open palms he fell, and then up and down, up and down the room he went, till coming upon his pointed shoes and stopping he laughed again. "That must be Sir James, it must. I shall tell Great Heart, yes, I shall; but now I must to Mr. Hiram

Boggs', yes, and tell Joe to come home with me; and how glad I am, how glad to have the chance to say, 'Joe, your time has come for gathering; the sack you have had folded in your pack weeks and months, but nothing for you to put in it, now open, gather.' This I must say because *they* tell me it will be."

So, with a word and a few grains for dearie; a raking of the coals as the nights were growing cold; a putting in of fresh tea to the pot, which was set near for future convenience; a wrapping of the cloak well about him, with a plunge, many times, into the cushion of the brass pin with which he finally confined it at the throat as he muttered, "Curse him, curse him;" a donning of the peaked hat; a snuffing out of the candle, which had been set in the window just before Sir James passed; a closing and locking of the outer door, and Isaac Harold set off for Cross-Cut Lane. He had been there on the day of the morning Hiram had brought him word of the no hopes concerning poor Mistress Boggs. He had found her speechless and almost powerless to move; he had condoled with her very much as he used to with Hiram, whom he had always before found speechless and powerless also, but from vastly different causes.

So upon this night that he started for Joe he said to himself, "No need this time of seeing Mistress Boggs, she will not know I call. Joe can say called away. Why I feel lighter on the feet and happier in the heart than I have for many a day. Can it be, Isaac, that you will be a gatherer of peaceful hours yet? No, no," and he sadly turned off the Wilton upon Cross-Cut Lane. "*They* tell me I shall gather for Great-Heart, and when that is done the sack will be full; I shall lay it down, and somebody else—"

"Come in, come in," broke his reverie, and looking up he found himself before the shop of "*Hiram* Boggs & Co.," the sign read now, and almost under the doorway of the parrot, whose cage was just inside.

Mr. Boggs came forward in clothes that fitted him, wearing a smile that became him, and bearing the general look of a man who had just begun to live. "Ah, Isaac," said he extending his hand, "glad to see you. Come

back, come back, we can hear the customers when they ring;" and he led the Little Man to the room in the rear of the shop, where he stirred the fire, set on the kettle, opened the cupboard door and took therefrom a lemon, a bottle, some sugar, and before Isaac knew what he was doing handed him a glass of negus.

"I seldom take anything but tea," said the visitor, "but—"

"But you will this time," interrupted Hiram, "it is in honor of the spikes."

Isaac looked questioningly as he still held the untasted glass, and Boggs said as if in reply, "The area, you know, the area; I had it spiked to-day, and the cats can't get over."

The Little Man looked as if he would straighten out, but out of respect to the invalid above stairs forebore, and only held himself at the knees, at the sides, while he laughed, and then took up the negus he had put down while he laughed and drank to "May the spikes never rust off, Hiram, and may the cats never come into the area; if they do, may you never again be called to drive 'em out."

"Thank you, Isaac, I know you mean it; thank you," and Mr. Boggs drained his glass and put it upon the table. "Did you see the new sign?" he asked as he nodded towards the shop, "it looks so good I dream of it at night."

"Yes, yes, I saw it; but what if she should ever see it."

"No hopes, no hopes; the man told me so. I had the sign ready, and when he told me again this morning that all the symptoms were no hopes, I had it put right up. It looks well, don't you think so?" and Hiram put one foot back and turned his head as if he were looking at it, while his hands sought his pockets and his whole air was of one contemplating a realized dream.

"Yes, it does, so it does look well, Hiram; and although I am sorry for Mistress Boggs, I really am glad to see it."

"I am sorry for her, too," sighed Boggs, "but so many years she has not been sorry for me."

"True, Hiram, true," said Isaac, "and now you must excuse me if I tell you my business and hurry back to Blue Bottle. I want to see the lodger—Joe."

"Yes, yes, I will call him," said Hiram, and tripped softly up stairs. And while he was gone the Little Man looked sadly around the room as if he missed some one he had always seen there—and so he did. He murmured to himself, "Excitement of any kind, any kind, and no hopes."

Joe came directly down behind Hiram and greeted Isaac most cordially.

Meantime, Sir James Lambert stepped up two flights in the last house at the end of Blue Bottle Court, rapped upon the door through which Mr. Hansom but a short time before had entered, scarce waiting for the sign of admittance from the inside. Not so with Sir James. He lingered after rapping till the door was swung back by the now not drowsy clerk of Trout & Thump; with dignity but not stiffness he bowed as he was invited to enter, which he did, removing at the same time his hat of soft, pliable felt. It was one of those head-coverings that a man can knock into any shape when he feels fatigued, or straighten into a proper and precise form if occasion requires. It was black, broad brimmed, and, as the wearer was not at all fatigued, or seemed not to be, the brim was held to the left side of the crown (which was made low by passing the hand through its centre) by a star with an emerald centre and twisted gold for its rays, each one of which terminated in a small but radiant diamond. This was the only jewel he wore. His nether garments were looser than the prevailing fashion, their texture of bottle-green color was soft and yet coarse; the waistcoat was closely and highly buttoned, even to within the boundaries of a broad rather low white collar; the coat, that is the under one, was not visible as to cut, fit, or trimmings, only so much of the latter could be detected as peeped from the large loose sleeve of the outer coat, they were cuffs of rich silk velvet of a dark green also; therefore, we infer that the garment itself matched the other two, over and around which it fell. The outer coat was somewhat heavier than the season or the protec-

tion of a close carriage called for, yet it well became its wearer, for it was long and he was tall; it was ample in its breadth, while he was somewhat thin and angular, so it gave him the appearance of having a lateral fulness that he really did not possess; it was black, of stuff ribbed heavily and lined warmly—its buttons were of the same color, but in their hearts was sunken a crest; but it was modestly done as if the owner of it had ordered it placed upon them not for show but for identity in case of accident. He had the face of an Englishman, and the air of one who had travelled in many countries. His dress as we have seen might have been of the former solely, and it might have been modelled after he had returned from the latter; one could not tell, and yet it was not an odd apparel. It was more the manner of the man who wore it which drew the casual gazer to look again.

So, after removing his hat, as we have said, he drew from his right hand a glove long at the wrist, well shapen at the fingers. The hand as he extended it to the sick woman, who was pillowed again in the same chair Mr. Hansom had found her, showed itself brown, quite brown. Labor? No. Exposure? Yes. From travel? It may be.

"Good woman," he spoke in a kindlier voice than one would have said he owned when looking at the sternness and determination upon his face, "I am sorry to see you thus suffering, sorry indeed. You expressed a wish to see Sir James Lambert. Am I the man? Satisfy yourself before you confide in me the trust you have had committed to your keeping."

She had given him her hand and before taking it away looked up into his face searchingly. "The same features that I have so often seen, only they are older; the eyes are not quite so mild, but they might be, I know, and gray, too; yes. The nose has not changed, the mouth is harder at the corners, but kind elsewhere. Yes, you are Sir James. I saw you once in London—you were pointed out to me; but many times I have been shown your portrait that still hangs on the walls at 'Rayless House,' for that is what good old Major Ray always called his home after he was left alone in it."

"An appropriate title it was, too," replied Sir James sadly. For a moment the sternness softened, but the next returned harsher than before. "That is, it must have been, for I can fancy the heavy misfortune that fell upon him took all light from his heart and home."

"Indeed it did, sir, indeed it did; it was a sorry sight to see him."

"And you were with him, good woman?"

"Yes, to the last, and he was glad to go. He was childish, very, before he died, but at the end he came to himself, and those that knew him before we did, said he was the man he used to be; but it did not last long, it was only the brightening before the going, you know." Here the woman lay back, and closed her eyes.

"You are exerting yourself too much," said Sir James, soothingly. "Now, I see well your goodness of heart and your intentions to tell me what I shall be so glad to hear; but remember, you are weak, and it seems better that you should tell me to-night only so much as you are bound to, for I shall not leave you, I shall come again. I do not desert the needy. This may revive you," and he took from his pocket a tiny flask, motioned to the clerk to bring him a glass, into which he poured a little of its contents and gave her to sip. It was old, rare, exhilarating a little, strengthening much; she tasted it, a few drops at a time, as she told her story.

"Yes, yes," she began, "I must make sure first of the great trust being given, and leave the rest till afterwards. My father was Jonas Barclay, one of the oldest and one of the most honored servants at Ivandale. You know of that place, Sir James, surely?" He bowed assent. "So I need not explain about the terror and gloom of the castle, the meanness and cruelty of its lord, for he was cruel, sir, but to none so much as to his own children. Well, my father was about the last to leave him—frightened away—the feasts he gave after his strayings from home were dreadful—feasts he called them, but the guests never ate anything, they drank and sang, and the place was colder and more desolate than ever, afterwards. Once Major Ray came there, and my father has often told me it was the only gleam of sunshine that had

been inside since the young master, who called himself William Seebold, was put out, and when the major was leaving he told my father of the daughter, Mary, and asked him to come to him if he was ever driven from the walls. And in time he went. I had left its service when quite young; it was too cold and dark, my father said, for a young person like me, and I went out with what my father could give me, to look out for myself. I learned to trim bonnets and in time was forewoman of a fine business. Then I married as good a man as a woman need want to. I met him when I went to Wenham to visit my father, so, he being a mechanic, and a master one too, we lived there, and he built some of the new factories that have been put up there since you left the village; and so it was, Sir James, that I was with the major—God rest his soul—and my father's—when each went beyond." And the woman rested as she raised her eyes and her finger upward. "The Lord Radnor came and went to Rayless House. For some time the major refused to see him, but at last he did, and I have often heard my father tell how changed he was. He cursed at first in the old way, but it ended in a cry; and once he even tried to pray for forgiveness when he was listening to the major's talk—the only man, he said, that had ever made him feel a bit good at heart; and so he went and came back, went away and came back, and it always seemed to me they were hunting for something or somebody; it might have been for the child of Mr. Richard Ray—I never could tell; but the major got so, Sir James, that he would trust nobody but my father. He made a will, and gave it to the man who keeps such things, then took it back and said he wouldn't trust anybody; but he did make one, I know, for good men in the village put their names to it, but they never saw it again. My father never told me, but I think he had it put in a secret part of the castle by Lord Radnor. But that is not my trust, Sir James, and I am only giving my surmises. But this is what I have for you," and she nodded to her son, who stood by listening to what he had never heard before; but he understood what she meant, and brought from a chest a small iron box panelled at the

sides and raised upon the top. She took a few sips of the strengthening wine, and went on, with the box in her hand: "This contains the keys, and, I think, the map of the castle, with, my father told me, a curse upon any hand who used them but those of Sir James Lambert, or somebody he should send. The major called for you often before he died, and told Lord Radnor of you till he, too, believed you could be trusted. My father lived, as his last master bade him, at Rayless House, after he was gone, and when it was his turn to go, he gave this to me with a solemn oath from me, that come what would I would never part with it till you should be found. 'Trouble,' he said 'goes in threes afore the spell is broke, and the third one lives, I know, and this will break it.' So I have kept it, Sir James, knowing that I should not die till I had seen you, but how it would be brought about I could not tell. Lord Radnor came back after my father died, opened the box and laid a key within; so, I think, he had been there—to Ivandale, I mean. He seemed broken in heart to find my father gone, and would not stay with me—some said he had wandered again, and so he had, Sir James, but it was a wandering he never came back from—he was found on the steps of William Seebold's old home—the home they say he burned, and it was a fit place, to my thinking, for him to die; although not to be too hard upon him, I think he was a better man for the knowing of Major Ray, than anybody ever thought he could be." Another sip after this, and tenderly she looked at the box. It had been with her so long, and been an object of so much solicitude, that she looked upon it almost as if it had been a child she was delivering into the hands of one who would care for it.

Sir James took it, and it was some moments before he could speak. At last emotion was conquered, thankfulness to the Power that guided him was silently rendered, and he said, "My good woman, I can never repay you for the faithfulness with which you have kept your trust and your oath, and I shall not show you in words alone my appreciation of it, but in deeds. This court is no place for you; you must be moved and cared for.

Your son is well enough in the hands of Mr. Thump for the present, but you need what I hope will soon bring back a renewed lease upon life, though I fear not a very lasting one."

"No, no, Sir James, I cannot live, and it may not be worth the while to move. I thank you, thank you," she almost whispered. He saw she was exhausted and assisted the son to lay her upon the bed, gave her, himself, a fresh drink from the flask, awaited until she had rallied and seemed ready for a natural rest; then bidding her a warm adieu, with the assurance that she should hear from him the following day, he shook hands with the clerk, who held open the door, put on his hat, and was soon driving away in the waiting carriage.

"I engaged you, honest Joe," said Mr. Wallace that night as they sat in the little room of Isaac Harold, "to be hound, horse, and hunter. The hound you have long been, waiting for your game in silence; the time has come for you to be the horse, fleet and sure-footed. To-morrow by nightfall will you be in readiness to start on the route of Cross-Bow coach? When at the first stop for relays do you be there to take it; you will have ample time, for it does not leave till eleven o'clock. I will tell you exactly where to await it. You will go by it to Kelpenwell, and then across country by foot to the borough of Quelton, there you will seek the magistrate, show him your right to search a lonely deserted castle called Ivandale. It has been vacated for years, and there are rumors that it is a rendezvous for revellers when daylight fades. When you enter that you will be the hunter firm and fearless. Now are you, or will you be ready?"

"I will," said Joe, "but may I ask a companion, Mr. Wallace? The dog, Rover?

"Exactly what I intended sending with you; and I am glad, Joe, you value him enough to ask for him. Here, good fellow," and the dog arose from before the fire and came forward for a pat from both masters, "you will search in an underground room for papers—private—that is a will and anything else pointing to family affairs. To find these shall give you fame; to deliver them shall give you fortune."

CHAPTER XLI.

AN IRON BOX PANELLED AT THE SIDES AND RAISED UPON THE TOP IS GIVEN MR. THUMP.

THE father had been given work which the mother had but truly said was all he asked for ; the baby, little Charley, grew daily, hourly, for he could see no reason in the world why he should do anything else—there were no draughts to inhale by day and lurk about inwardly till, in the stillness of night, they could double him with pain ; the floors were not bare, at least, not the one in the room he was kept; the fire was not low ; the chair was easy, the rocking gentle and soothing; the "Hush, my dear," which came from a happy mother's heart and life, always quieted him. When they were able Miss Hamper, Miss Thump, and Meg, with some assistance from Peleg, had them removed to the house into which Samuel had been carried when he was called from the borders of the beyond, because Susan Thump needed him to round out her life and make her feel satisfied with herself and the world when her journey should be at an end.

The little house was for rent. Susan saw its bill one morning as she stepped upon the porch for a breath of fresh air, and to gather, in the china cup she held, a few seeds from the vines—the frost had opened their coverings and at a touch of the hand they fell into the cup.

"Humph!" said she, "I won't tell anybody. I told once what I was going to do and I got a twenty-pound note for a helper, and I said then, 'Susan Thump never neglect your duty, but keep your doings to yourself.' So here is a chance. There is the last quarter's interest—not a shilling spent—and another near due. Samuel won't let me have a chance to buy anything. I'll just see now what I can do—and Meg shall help, she is so fond of the mite, too."

In an hour the bill was washed off by a charwoman, who was soon at work inside with a bucket, brush, and broom ; when the dampness consequent upon the cleaning had been persuaded by the next day's sun that its further stay was not conducive to the health of the newly born, it disappeared and left the house dry and sweet smelling. Then, along came Miss Thump with Meg; they measured and planned till by and by Miss Hamper looked in on her way from Poorly's, to say that the mother was well enough and the baby hearty enough for removal when all things were ready.

Peleg laid the carpets, jointed and corded the bedsteads, hung the curtains, and set the stove where it would draw whichever way the wind might blow. Miss Thump and Miss Hamper put the practical in place, such as bed-covers and linen, dishes and pans, bread and meat, sugar and tea; while Meg did the ornamental, touching up here and there, a cushion for the table in the sleeping room, a tidy for the best chair in the little front room, a loop for the muslin curtains, with a tacking on the wall some of her own pencillings in frames of her own make, and a promise to herself that some day she would add to them little Charley's face—for with even a bit of the ordinary lead, Meg could trace from life and from fancy what an artist might not blush to own.

So, after a few days' labor, the house was made ready, the home was awaiting the coming of Charley the elder, Charley the younger, and the little woman who was wife to the one and mother to the other.

There were coals in the yard, and comfort in the kitchen; so when the father came home from his work one night, he found word awaiting him to call at Lunley Lane. He went, and when the truth dawned upon him, and he sat at supper with his wife, cheery and almost rosy, opposite him, while the baby lay in its cradle near by, he bowed his head, and from his heart went up thanks to the Good Giver and an earnest petition for blessings upon the hands that had given, and the hearts that had opened to them. To this little home Meg often went to fondle the baby and chat with the mother.

The night was closing in rapidly about the Lane

when Mr. Thump hurried along its way from the fly to the cottage gate. Mother Susan was looking anxiously from the lighted parlor, and when she heard his step the maid was bidden to bring the waiting tea while she opened the door upon the porch.

"Why, Samuel, dear," was her greeting from a short distance above the brooch that held the kerchief and from over which the white cap-strings were always kept by a dexterous spreading where they crossed under the chin, "you are late, but welcome."

"Yes, little Mother Susan, I am not as early as usual, I know, but don't think me lazy or loitering, for I have been neither; work, work to do—you know I like to be busy as well as you," and if we saw aright through the half-closed door of the porch, Miss Thump's shining bombazine waist had a strong manly arm about it as she and her son entered the little parlor where the silver urn soon reflected her happy face, as she turned from it, into the filagreed cup, the rose-flavored tea.

The buns she thought a little too brown, but he assured her they were just right. Truth was, he did not know crust from centre.

The meat had been cut some time; was it not a little dry? The maid must chip some other.

He declared he had never tasted fresher.

She looked questioningly at him, but he was lost in his own queries.

When the meal was completed and the cloth removed, Mother Susan thought she owed a look in upon Charley's wife across the Lane, some doors above; so telling Samuel where she was going, she tripped down the walk and through the gate.

Thus left alone he took notes, papers, and slips from his pocket and the dark blue bag; so absorbed was he in reading, tracing, and planning, that he did not heed her entrance after an hour's time. It was an unusual thing for him to bring to the cottage the cares and anxieties of the office, and as her curiosity had neither abated nor been appeased since he had enlisted in the cause of the client who had sent him to Wenham, she naturally combined the two and said, after standing a few moments

watching his thoughtful, and not a little troubled face, "Samuel, you are worrying yourself too much, I have seen it for many days; yes, ever since you came home. Now, I wouldn't bother so much. Instead of staying here alone and studying over something that I suppose nobody can ever find out, why didn't you take a turn out? The air is cool—why, I feel better for the walk I had," and the little woman, into whose face Mr. Thump looked, was aglow on the cheeks, bright in the eye, cool and breezy about the garments, as if the cold without had enjoyed it as much as she.

"I have had a long walk to day, Mother Susan," he replied somewhat absently, "and I will confess much to perplex me, but it is not past finding out, as you suggest. That is what I am employed for, to find out somebody who ought to heir vast estates."

"And if the somebody ought to what is to hinder doing it? I never could see the use in so many papers for a very little thing. I could settle some things that folks bother over in a few words. Humph! if somebody ought to, why don't the somebody do it? I shouldn't think it would be a hard matter to coax anyone to do—take what everybody wants—money." Here Miss Thump laid aside her shawl, bonnet, and gloves, put them upon the sofa and drew her own easy chair near to the table; as she was leaning towards it preparatory to settling herself for rocking while she listened to whatever disclosures Samuel chose to make, her eye caught the translation, for such it might be termed, that Mr. Wallace had made of the water-worn papers found upon Maria. "Samuel," she exclaimed, "who wrote that? Bless me, bless me, I'm glad to see it. It's the same, the very same. I'll go right and get it; yes, I know just where I put it," and she was gone before Mr. Thump could say what or wherefore.

He heard her feet pattering on the floor above, heard a drawer open, shut, and in a moment more she, laboring a little from undue exertion of the respiratory organs, sat again by his side.

"Here, Samuel," she said when she could talk, "look at that."

"He took what she held, unfolded it and started back. It was the note written which had accompanied the one printed—Twenty pounds, Bank of England. After a few minutes' examination and comparison with the translation he said, "It is the same hand, without question, but this only leaves me more than ever in doubt as to the truth of my suspicions."

"Humph," replied Susan, "I don't see any suspicion about it. The man who wrote the one, wrote the other; that's proof enough for anybody," and she held the two before her.

"But my suspicions are not of the writing," returned he, smiling at the womanly conclusion she had jumped at, "but of the writer."

"Oh!" and the tone was half questioning, half coaxing.

There was silence for a few moments, which Mr. Thump broke with, "Mother Susan, I think I have found out who the young girl was who lay here in this room last summer. Her name was Maria, you remember?"

"Yes, yes, poor thing, but I am sure you have found out nothing but good of her—she had too sweet a face for anyone but the best," and for the moment curiosity was checked by that sympathy, sincere and heartfelt, which misfortune always called forth from the good heart of Susan Thump.

Another pause on the part of Mr. Thump, but at last he said, with a look as if he had suddenly decided that he was about to do a right thing, "I am going to break or rather make an exception to my rule of secrecy concerning a client's case, and tell you a strange story, Mother Susan, and of course, with you it will be as safe as it is with myself?"

She nodded assent, the cap-strings trembled a little, the hands smoothed the bombazine lap, the rockers moved a very trifle, and Miss Thump listened.

It was a story which could not be partially told, so interwoven were the parts each character had played in the drama. She listened and noted, names particularly did not escape her; the blind man she had known, the

dog too—upon this latter Mr. Thump dwelt some time. Mr. Hansom owned him, for he had well obeyed him at Jericho, as he would none but an old master; the blind man owned him, for he led him as one who had long been in his service; and he had been in the company of the man at Isaac Harold's door, whom he afterwards ascertained was Mr. Wallace. "Now, you see," he concluded, "I am puzzled to find the heiress, and I am confident a mystery surrounds the man who has engaged my services."

"Maybe not so much around him as the dog, Samuel," laughed Miss Thump. "Now, let me see what I know," and she told of her visit to the morgue, accompanied by this same blind man and his dog; of the sneaking, shambling figure, which she now knew must have been that of Marplot; of its effect upon both the dog and his master; and if the latter was so sightless as to be led, she did not see how he could know who was before him. She had often watched him as he stood at the corner of Wilton and the Lane, for his air was not that of a beggar; he thanked for what was dropped into his hat or his hand, but he did not seem humble, and the dog was too particular for the leader of a common mendicant.

While she was talking it had been Mr. Thump's turn to listen and note, and the latter he did when he recalled to mind that Mr. Hansom had said he was at the morgue. A thought flashed over him, and the mystery was solved; but he did not tell of it. There was another thought, which did not flash, but was given to Susan that night long after she had laid her busy head upon the pillow, and that thought would not leave her, sleeping or waking.

After the light had entered Mr. Thump's mind he turned to the papers again saying "I must now make out cause for securing this man Marplot at once."

"Poor man," sighed Susan, "will you shut him up?"

"That I will, and as speedily as possible. Glad I shall be to do it, for I believe him guilty of all, and even more than he is accused of," returned Mr. Thump with more sternness of face than the little woman at his side had ever seen there before.

"Yes," she sighed again, "but I am always sorry for folks that are bad, sorry that they have to be wicked."

"But I don't think they have to be as you say, Mother Susan."

"Sometimes it is born in them, and sometimes it comes to them, Samuel, and they must get rid of it," she replied emphatically; "and the pity is so many folks have to suffer to help them get rid of it."

Mr. Thump assented to the last and turned to the filling of a blank before him, murmuring, "Purely circumstantial thus far, but I hope for more than that before a trial."

The next morning, soon after reaching his office, the clerk announced a gentleman awaiting outside, and brought in the card of Mr. John Hansom. As Mr. Trout had grown of late quite inattentive to the early morning business, Mr. Thump sent for the caller to come in, which he and the golden bird perched upon the ebony cane did quite speedily. The same velvet cloak covered him, and under it and one arm he carried the iron box which Sir James Lambert had been given the evening before.

"Good morning, Mr. Thump, good morning; air good, sun bright, sir, bright as your client's case. I can't tarry long, so I will make my point at once and be gone. Let me first say," and the gentleman sunk with the aid of the bird, yet somewhat burdened by the box, into a chair that Mr. Thump set invitingly forward. "Let me say, sir, that you said, if I could bring the keys, you would call it nothing short of a special interposition; interposition of what, or whom, you did not say, and you need not, sir, you need not. All I ask is to say chance ain't at work in this case; chance don't guide us, eh, Owlie? See her, see that bird, how she glows; and no wonder, no wonder, sir." Here, to show the cause of the no wonder, Mr. Hansom drew from under his arm and cloak the panelled iron box and put it on the table; touching a spring, the raised lid flew up and within lay the keys and a complete way of Ivandale. The latter he spread before the astonished lawyer, continuing, "That is a point of points, sir—how did I get them?

you might think it, if you didn't ask it, so I will say some day, and from the bright look of things, I hope the day is not far off when I shall tell you, sir, tell you. Now, I will be brief, for I see you are making points for other people as well as your client that I have brought you; that is, sir, I gave you the case and not the client, didn't I? Well, well, we are not ready for her yet. She will come, she will come, but chance won't bring her; no. I have made my point against you in chance, Mr. Thump, and a good one it is; very good, indeed, sir. But I said I would be brief, and I will; yes, I will. My man will be ready at dark to start for Ivandale; will you meet us before that time at Isaac Harold's, 4 Blue Bottle Court? Not absolutely necessary, sir, but looks better; gives better send-off to have legal adviser present; and now, when you are through with your points for other people, you can look the map well over and see, sir, if there are any special instructions for him, and you can bring the box, and I will say, good morning, sir, good morning; air good, and sun bright."

So, without giving Mr. Thump chance for anything but a good morning when he came in, and the same as he went out, the elderly gentleman and the ebony cane stumped down the stairs, followed by the wide awake clerk, who took occasion while assisting him into the fly, to say, "Thank you for what—" but he got no farther. Mr. Hansom broke in, "Sir James will see that she is removed, sir; please close the door upon me; good day, good day;" and left alone he had time to think while he adjusted the mongrel curls and straightened the beard, which was not the best of a match for them.

Mr. Trout did not arrive early, so the pressing business was attended to by the junior partner, consequently the iron box was locked within a private apartment of his desk. It required time undisturbed to digest the contents and the way, if he could, of the finding thereof; and this was not forthcoming until afternoon, when, with the map spread before him, he traced the way one might enter by the lodge-keeper's shelter, which he knew had fallen in at the roof and crumbled so about the walls, that it would scarce be recognized as such. This he

noted, with quite explicit directions, also as to the journey across the country, the finding of Quelton's worthy magistrate, and appended a few lines which he signed in full, recommending Joe as the man detailed for the search. This done, he gave a few moments' thought to the solving how these were obtained, The paper addressed to Sir James Lambert, requesting him to search within the walls of Ivandale for documents of value, and ending with the curse upon whomsoever should do so without his command, had been taken from the box, so Mr. Thump had not that key for the further unlocking of the mysterious; but in the thinking he became so tangled in the memories of the knitted sprig with the dot for a falling berry, that there seemed no other way of clearing his brain and easing his heart than venturing a note to Meg, the which he had done every day that he had not been able to see her, and it would not be surprising if he had done so, even when he knew he could see her.

It is not an uncommon assurance for lovers to take, and Samuel Thump was no exception; he comforted himself much after the manner of them. He carried the cherry knot made of "the narrower" which he had slipped from her hair, next his heart; he sighed over it and dreamed over it; and after sealing the note just written, he peeped tenderly at it. He had told Mother Susan at dinner that he should be home early to supper; so, as it was already past four, he took the box and the dark blue bag in either hand, bade Mr. Trout, who was as busy upon private matters as he had been, and the clerk good day, and sought the cottage.

Mother Susan was awaiting him; the tea and the urn were awaiting each other, and the table laid with its snowy damask, clear china, and shining silver looked invitingly to all. Nothing was said during the meal of their conversation of the night previous, and yet the same thought was abiding with Susan. And the flash of light upon Samuel's mind had been somewhat dimmed when Mr. Hansom had brought him the box, for he had heard at Wenham that the woman who held the keys was to deliver to none but Sir James Lambert, and in the

finding of him, his client, or rather the one who was acting for her, seemed perfectly indifferent. So each was thoughtful, and when the table had been cleared and there was no danger of intrusion from the maid, Samuel opened again the box and showed Mother Susan what was within. The keys she handled one by one with awe, the map she looked at, and followed his finger as it traced the way. Joe would no doubt take over the grounds without and under the ground within.

"Now," said he as he folded the one, laid back the others, "I am going to Blue Bottle Court to see the man who is to search for what we need. He and Mr. Hansom will be at Isaac Harold's."

"Why that's the gatherer," interrupted Miss Thump, "who brought the twenty-pound note. But where did you get this, Samuel?" and she pointed to the box now closed and ready for being taken away.

"Mr. Hansom got it, but where I cannot say now. I shall be late if I do not make haste." As he needed a heavier surtout for the night air, Miss Thump brought it, helped him put it in place about the neck and shoulders, followed him upon the porch, and stood there till the gate clicked behind him.

Isaac Harold was happy; he was gathering, not into his sack, but into his little room. He was welcoming Mr. Hansom, whose instructions Joe had been informed he might obey as if they were those of Mr. Wallace; Rover, who looked a little sad at the thought of parting with all but dearie, and to her he seemed to cast taunting glances; Joe himself, who came with stout heart and warm heavy clothing on and more strapped upon his shoulders; and lastly Mr. Thump himself, who opened the door as one bade "Come in! come in!"

The visitor obeyed and found himself speedily ushered into the snuggest and the neatest room he thought he had ever been in outside his own home. Mr. Hansom being the elderly gentleman of the group, sat upon the easy chair, Joe was upon the high stool, and from a corner under dearie's cage Isaac pulled a chair that was many-jointed in its frame, pliable in its covering, and so could take up as much space as any if it was allowed to,

or could be folded and put away into a very small compass if it needed to be. Its wooden part was a jet black with gilt stripes which had tarnished with time and hard usage ; the web which made its back and seat were of blue satin spotted with wine, perhaps, and faded with much sitting upon, no doubt, but it had once been, and indeed still was, a marvel of skill, with its birds and flowers, vines and tendrils done in silks and flosses, beads and feathers, by fair fingers—and having had its day, it was gathered into the sack, and so took happily to the corner from which it was only brought forth when visitors were many, as on the present occasion. The Little Man, of course, sat upon the *prie-dieu*, with his chin upon his hands and listened. Joe was introduced to the legal adviser in the case, who told him what he knew of the inns, roads, etc., then showed him the map and notes he had made.

There seemed little else to do ; so, as the lawyer saw the Little Man was making preparations for refreshing the traveller with tea and whatever else was within the cupboard, he bade Joe a hearty good-bye with sincere wishes for his speedy success. Rover he petted and fondled. Mr. Hansom he congratulated upon securing so promising a man, and Isaac he shook warmly by the hand. He left a light and cheeriness behind him that all felt, and when the supper was spread it seemed to taste the better to all for the coming and going of the young lawyer. Dearie looked with her head on one side then on the other, perched upon Mr. Hansom's hand, but ate little ; she seemed to feel the coming of something sad. The dog once looked at her kindly ; she whistled and plumed herself, but he noticed her no more. Joe ate heartily and Isaac served generously. Mr. Hansom drank of the tea, tasted a sweet bun and then busied himself with an overlooking of the bag of provisions he had brought for Rover and his new master. Meats dried, crackers fresh and crisp, cheese new and rich, cakes that time would not mould and a bottle of *l'eau de vie* for fatigue and exhaustion.

An hour later three men and a dog were seen to halt without the court-yard of Cross-Bow inn ; one, the tallest

and most angular entered and asked how far to the first halt of the eleven o'clock coach, thanked the keeper and joined those without. They all walked on — one, two, three miles, till Joe protested against the needless tiring of his companions, although loth to part company with them; so again they halted. The moon once more looked kindly on them, but the air through which she shot her soft beams was frosty; before it was warm and balmy. The way was a little lonely where they separated, yet it was sparsely settled all along till he reached the station where he awaited the coach from Cross Bow. Isaac did not feel cheery enough to straighten out, and he did not feel like drawing up, yet as he took Joe's hand, his own trembled and his voice gave a husky good-bye. Rover laid his head in turn upon his shoulder and that of Mr. Wallace, for he was the tall and angular we have spoken of, lapped their faces and lay at the feet of Joe till he should be bidden to follow or lead. Mr. Wallace's grip, short, warm, and his "farewell Joe," was supplemented with "God speed you." Isaac drew his cloak closely about him, turned toward London. Great Heart followed him. Joe and Rover were soon lost sight of, but the short, quick, and ever fainter barks of the latter told they were moving on and away. Cross-Bow coach took them to Kelpenwell; then across by highway and by-way they went till they were in Quelton; here they rested over night, sought the magistrate and made their way through as quiet a country as can be found in England, till upon the fifth day after they had left London they stood before the entrance to Ivandale. Joe opened the box, fitted a key to its outer portal; with much exertion the bolt turned rustily, unwillingly; the gate he at last moved upon its weary hinges enough to admit him laterally.

The man looked in, the dog looked back, but they broke the awful stillness together.

CHAPTER XLII.

MRS. TROUT FINDS, UNEXPECTEDLY, HER MOTHER.

When Mr. and Mrs. Selwyn Sellers Trout found themselves side by side in the hansom, they inwardly felt exceedingly ridiculous; they outwardly looked perfectly satisfied.

"My dear," said the husband, buttoning his surtout for lack of something else to do, "I think it advisable to keep our marriage a secret for a few days, until I have made suitable arrangements for one in your station, or in which you will be soon. I have all things in readiness now for claiming what by right is yours, and shall start with you shortly for the counties in which these properties await you, and lest it might make you a subject of comment from Mrs. Mutter and her lodgers, we will not speak of our recent contract till we are about to leave," and he smiled so blandly in every feature, that his forehead, too, caught the infection, and raised his hat a trifle in its effort, so he removed that new and shining article, and smoothed his bald crown while he awaited her reply.

"It is so charming," she simpered, and rolled her eyes sentimentally, "to have some one to care for me, that I make but acquiescence in what you propose."

She was vexed at the stupidity of the groom in not providing witnesses, and a somebody to give her away, but she did not deem it best, at so early a stage of the matrimonial career to show resentment at what she thought an affront to herself.

So it was decided they should take a drive about London, and then alight at the same corner where they had found the hansom awaiting them. This they did, and no one but Zeke and Mary Ann knew that Miss Ray had gone out that bright morning.

Craft and cunning, who had so faithfully served Mr. Trout since his birth, and had even, we found, begun their attendance just before, had utterly deserted him now in the very time when he needed them most, but it was his own fault. When craft whispered in the vaults subterranean, "Supply the needful link," and cunning added, "I'll show you how," they meant to and would perhaps have carried him successfully through, but the face was so pretty, the ways so enchanting, the slipper so gentle in its patting, the rosette so dainty, that he listened to soft-hearted love, which so chagrined and disgusted craft and cunning that they betook themselves to flight —yes, they were even making ready, and if we mistake not, did desert him when Mr. Wallace held his second interview with their former master. It will be readily seen that it was not in accordance with their instructions that he had so hastily put his neck under the yoke hymenial, or would ever put it there at all; so, after this, they made no further attempt to conciliate with him, but he had the link which they had supplied; that they could not get back, although they might not let him use it as they would have done.

He alighted from the hansom, but before doing so, he had pressed warmly the dainty hand of his wife, sighed, and no doubt would have kissed her, but the place was too public, so he only sighed again and then smiled.

He looked after her. She turned the corner, he turned to himself and to the driver of the hansom. The latter he paid liberally; the former he took to Poorly's Resort. There he rapped upon the front of Marplot's dingy dwelling; paused, rapped twice, paused again, and the occupant below stairs opened to him.

"Glad to see you; oh! glad indeed," said the lawyer, withholding his hand lest the electric shock might affect him too much for what he had to do.

"And I want to see you," returned Marplot, rather sulkily. "I have written for you to call, but you were not in, or so they told the young man I sent—Ralph Speeder."

"Ah! oh!" replied Mr. Trout, following his host in, and sitting down upon a chair without any back, and

quite uncertain legs, "sorry, indeed, very sorry, so am glad I came to-day. Is there anything special you needed me for?"

"Only to say that things must be pushed. I am living in poverty, and I ought to have plenty. You have had time enough to make all ready now," and the almost insolent tone in which Marplot spoke, the no need there was for the wiping away of the secretions, the independent manner he tried to assume, the bold way in which he eyed him, startled Mr. Trout, and he interrupted him.

"Oh, I have everything quite to my mind now, and I know it will be to yours. I find upon occasional calls upon Miss Ray that she knows but little of what she is here for, so now, if you will sign this, I will start for Wenham in a few days, present your claim, and get Ivandale for her, if I can, and give you, of course, a share."

"In writing," said Marplot; "I must have it in black and white. Here, write it down," and he put before the lawyer a quill well crusted, a stand that might have been constructed for its present purpose, that of holding ink —it might have been made a pot for enclosing mustard, and the latter was no doubt its legitimate calling in life— and a sheet of paper thumbed at the margin and curled at the corners. Upon this Mr. Trout wrote an agreement to pay him a per cent of the worth of Lord Radnor's estate. He made not the slightest objection to the stipulation of his client, a fact which somewhat surprised the latter. This being done the lawyer proposed that they apply to the nearest justice to witness the signature of Marplot to the paper which would give him power to claim the Ray estate in his, Marplot's name.

"I shall start," said he, "as soon as Tom Barley returns, although that can have little to do with you; but if Radnor is dead, it will save me one trip, and times are busy with me." He rubbed his hands satisfactorily, while Marplot put on his hat and drew on a long rusty coat, out at the elbows, greasy on the collar, fringed at the cuffs, and remarked that Tom was gone much too long.

To this Mr. Trout made no reply, he busied himself with putting on his gloves; he wanted to get out of the

little room whose air was stifling and heavy with miscellaneous odors.

The justice saw them. He signed. Marplot signed. Mr. Trout was so considerate as to pay the fee, and when lawyer and client were without, the latter said he would leave London so soon as he had the portable part of the estate in hand.

"You may, and no doubt will, have to present yourself, Marplot, in Wenham, unless you can show good reason why you should not," said Mr. Trout significantly as he hurried away without giving his client time to reply.

This had the effect of starting the glands into action again, so wiping and shambling, Marplot turned back to the Resort muttering, "I've got him if it comes to light; S. S. Trout it was signed. Ha, ha! that was another master-stroke of mine. I am shrewd after all," and forgetting that he had not turned the key upon his lodging, he sidled about and strolled through ways quite as miserable as the one in which he dwelt. After an hour or more he returned, still oozing and wiping as he chuckled within himself; and when he entered the room it struck him things were not quite as he had left them, but that notion was dispelled by the remembrance that Mr. Trout had disarranged somewhat the usual disorder of things, and he sat down to more thinking and plotting, that is, making plots which might be found needful if things went against him in the issue speedily at hand.

When Mrs. Trout found herself again upon the second floor, end room of Mrs. Mutter's popular lodgings, she threw off the pretty bonnet, the graceful mantle, the tasty dress, and easing herself in a loose sack sat down and looked upon the floor, which she began to address somewhat in this wise:

"Am I a fool?"

The floor made no reply.

"What else could I do?"

It was still passive.

"I think something sure is better than something uncertain."

At this reasoning she laughed herself, and cared

not for the floor's opinion ; yet she went on, with her eyes still upon it.

"As I have often said, I cannot work. I have no money, and yet—ah, yes, surely, how could I forget—I am to be mistress of vast estates ! Ah, yes, so I am. Very well, if other folks choose to run risks I have nothing to say, only let me live and not be oppressed with the vulgar feeling that I must earn my bread. Bah ! I have done that long enough. Let me see how it looks," and she took up a pencil near at hand and wrote, Mrs. S. S. Trout. "Now, really, that looks very well : there are surely worse names to be found."

The dinner bell broke in upon her soliloquy, and hastily preparing herself she went down feeling a little vexed that her husband had not taken her to some select and retired stall and ordered a good dinner—something she had not yet partaken of since she came to England. This neglect was not from penuriousness ; it was because he was intent upon hastening his departure from London, but she did not then know it.

The meal was eaten as usual ; her manner was calm ; her replies, when addressed, for she ventured nothing herself, were pleasant. Zeke eyed her cunningly, and Mary Ann made an excuse to peep in through the half-closed door that led to her domains, but they saw no change in her.

Mr. Trout did not come again that day partly to divert suspicion and partly because he had so much to do, but the following day a caller rang the bell of No. 40.

Zeke attended and found a young man, whom he took to be an "happlerkant," and was about to demean himself accordingly, when to his surprise Miss Ray was inquired for.

He was shown into the parlor, and his card—which bore, Zeke found on his way up, the name of "Ralph Speeder"—was presented in a very familiar sort of way ; that is, with a wink and a nudge which might not have struck Zeke unpleasantly had they been given by any one he knew, but he liked some reserve between strangers ; so not being favorably impressed he took his own

time on the stairway and loitered upon the landing until he heard Mrs. Mutter bustling about in the front room, attending with no very delicate touch to the wants of the rheumatic Mrs. Crowfoot, and he knew she was liable to pounce upon him at any moment, for she never opened and closed a door like other people. She had a way of being one moment perfectly still upon one side of it, and at the next being suddenly upon the other side; either she opened the door very quietly and stepped softly, or else she made the ordinary noise, but so quickly that it was not perceptible—it was a question that was scarcely admissible of solution, for she was so seldom seen in the doing thereof—only immediately after it was done.

With this peculiar faculty of hers in mind, Zeke took warning, for if anything delighted his heart it was to outwit his mistress and have something transpire in the house without her knowledge—a thing which was not often done, it is true—and he rapped at Miss Ray's door.

She knew his signal, opened the door, took the card, read it, looked at Zeke's hand to see if he had not been charged with more than one for delivery and given her what was intended for some other lodger, but he assured her the person—it will be seen he was nice enough to discriminate between a gentleman and a person—called for her.

"What does he look like?" she asked wonderingly.

"'E don't look so bad as 'e hacts," returned Zeke, who balanced upon the toes of the right foot, nudged the casement with his elbows and winked at it, "I doesn't call that be'avin' well—an happlerkant wouldn't do that bad," but he broke off suddenly, pointing toward the front room, for there was an ominous silence upon the other side of the door leading therein, and hurrying down the stairs told Mr. Ralph Speeder on his own authority that Miss Ray would be down soon.

That young lady, much perplexed at who in London beside Mr. Trout should know her, or her whereabouts, rather mechanically tightened the ruby-colored cord with the silken tassels, smoothed her hair upon the top and coaxed the little curls at the side, while a slight shadow rested on the face, for her heart was not light.

Mr. Speeder was not prepared to see one so wholly unlike himself, and he felt quite abashed when she appeared, so pretty in face, figure, and dress; so much superior in dignity, carriage, and manner to aught he had ever been brought so near to.

She took him in at one glance, from the unpolished shoes with their broken and knotted ties, to the hat which he still kept upon locks that were daily neglected by brush and comb, and were not monthly frequenters of the barber's apartments. In justice to him we will say, he knew enough to take off his hat, but he had forgotten to do so, till he saw her eyeing it, and he seized it with a jerky, yanking movement, as if he meditated summary punishment upon it for not coming off itself when it should have done. Then he arose, while doubling and twisting it in his hand, and said, "Miss Ray?" —he was about to add "eh?" with a wink, but checked himself in time.

"It is," she returned. "Will you please state what brings you to me?"

This stately remark brought him back to himself, and he thought, but did not say it, "Ha! soon take the starch out." He saw that he must conceal what he wanted to throw in her teeth—for he knew that her life had been easier than his, and he hated her for it—if he would make her do what he wished her to do, so he replied, "What brings me here? a request from a lady that's got something to tell that you want to know. Don't s'pose you'll believe me, so I got her to write it," and he handed her a bit of crumpled paper, on which, in a feeble scrawling hand—yet it bore traces of a power, if in strength, to form its letters well and shapely—was written

"Dear Margaret: come to me.

"YOUR MOTHER."

It took more to throw Miss Ray off a mental equilibrium than most of her sex—age and experience in life—but this completely unnerved her. She caught at the chair back, for she had not yet sat down, and as soon as she could, took a vinaigrette from her pocket; its volatile contents revived her, and she read again with more com-

posure. That she had a mother once nature's laws alone had taught her. That a woman's face she had seen in childhood and upon the vessel from America was often before her she knew. It had beauty in all but the eyes, and they were—she had pronounced them wicked to Mr. Trout, but now as she recalled them, they seemed wild, despairing, almost maniacal. Could this woman be her mother? If so, why had she left her all these years to the care of strangers and at their mercy? She had no love for her, but duty—no, curiosity concerning her origin, induced her to trust to the slouchy, uncouth messenger as her guide, for she supposed he was to act as such, the request containing no address.

"Where does this person live?" she asked haughtily, yet he had noted beneath his lopping eyes the effect it had had.

"I am to take you to her," came rather curtly; and tired of standing on one foot so long, for he never bore weight upon two at once, he rudely sat down and began staring about the room with an air that said, "You can do as you please, but you'll miss if you don't."

She turned upon him a look of contempt and left the room without a word. Hastily dressing, she soon reappeared, heavily veiled and well cloaked. Motioning him to follow her, they passed out the street door with none to see them but Zeke; so she knew the visitor's coming and their going was safe from Mrs. Mutter's knowledge.

They walked rapidly. He, at first, was not inclined to do so, but she keeping always a little ahead showed him her desire to be at their destination as speedily as possible; therefore, he quickened his pace, and they reached Blue Bottle Court just after Meg had passed out of it followed by Isaac Harold.

She had been to the sick woman she so disliked and yet would not see her suffer; she had left some gruel, some soup, and arranged her bed and tidied the room generally, given it fresh air, while she threw extra covering over the patient, who was listless at times from exhaustion, and at others showed strength that was purely nervous, for it left a flush upon the face and quickened the pulse. When her comfort for a few hours had been

insured, Meg said she would go, if there was nothing more to be done, and that Miss Hamper would look in upon her in the afternoon. The woman she knew did not like young girls about her, and she herself did not like to do for her, and yet she pitied her. The going was never a lingering one, to add a pat to the cover or a smooth to the pillow, as was the case with many a one she cared for. Bidding her a good-morning, which was responded to by the invalid with her face turned away, she passed out and down the flight, passed the now vacant room of the clerk and his mother who had been moved to more genteel and accommodating quarters upon the day after Sir James's visit by a woman who bore a letter from him, and who forestalled herself as nurse, and a kind and worthy one she proved. Meg had been to see her, and found her gaining in strength and spirits. She felt a loneliness in the house when she passed her room, but was glad that she had gone from its dreariness and want.

Once in the court again she breathed more freely and said to herself that she would relieve Mother Martha of home duties and let her attend the woman, for her presence stifled her in breath and depressed her at heart. She hurried on. Isaac saw her come into the court, and watched for her to go out ; he followed her, as we have recorded, and so missed giving Great Heart the opportunity to solve the relationship between Margaret Ray—Mrs. Trout we should call her, if her marriage were not still a secret—and the woman, and also to hear her story, but this fell into hands which were waiting for it as well as his ; so we will enter the last house at the end and bear truthful witness to what transpired.

Not a word had passed between Ralph and Miss Ray after they turned from Mrs. Mutter's door. She was proud and thought him beneath her attention ; he was exultant and waiting his time. When they reached the door upon the third floor he tapped ; the same signal it was which he gave when he had been there a few days before—thrice—twice—once.

The 'come in,' was tremulous, excited, and when he pushed open the door the sick woman was raising herself

upon one hand and peering eagerly forward. Miss Ray felt a shudder creep over her, but the drawing of the mantle concealed it. She shut out the sight for a moment, but the veil covered her closed eyes. Nerving herself for whatever might come, she unveiled her face and drew near the cot whose clothes were coarse but neat, as of a certainty they would be with the nurses the woman was fortunate enough to have. A low table made by putting a circular bit of knotted wood upon a not much smoothed stick to which were nailed three slightly curved ones for feet, and the whole stained with a solution probably of the dye-stuff called logwood, stood near her ; it could be reached from the cot. On it were a glass of water for thirst, some spirits of nitre for fever, some gruel for nourishment. On each side was a wooden chair painted once yellow and black, but their coating had vanished in so many places that they had a leprous look ; a stove, that when she was in health had, no doubt, been used for cooking, held a glowing fire, for Meg had just bought a basket of coals from the green-grocer at the corner, and left it well supplied. Upon the walls were hung from wooden pegs, dresses which had been made for those of wealth and fashion, and, no doubt, given to her because their wearers were weary of them, and they now began themselves to take on a jaded, ragged air, as if their self-respect was wellnigh gone. The one window was curtained by a bit of chintz that relieved by its gaiety the monotony of the room. At the head of the cot stood a small chest, whose key she guarded carefully. She looked upon Margaret, and the wildness, that the girl had termed wickedness, came back to her eyes, and sitting erect she put out her arms feebly, it is true, yet if there had been any warmth towards her their motion would have been read aright.

Miss Ray pretended she did not see them and looked for one of the chairs, into which she sank rather than sat, for her limbs were weakening ; she could see, despite the pallor and sunken features, that the face was the one she remembered, and the same that had been with her on shipboard. Could this, indeed, be her mother ? She knew she must speak, or move, or bow, or do something

to show that she would give her at least the salutation due a stranger into whose home she had been invited, so with an effort she said, "I am sorry to see you sick," but her voice sounded cold and heartless in her own ears and she paused.

The woman lay back upon her pillow, drew the covers over her head, and so still she lay for a few moments and so pulseless seemed her heart, that Miss Ray would not have been surprised if she had found life gone.

Ralph did not draw near. When they entered, he merely nodded to her and jerked his head in the direction of the young lady, as if to say, "I've fetched her," then, as he was thinly clad, drew up to the fire and between warming and blowing his stiff blue fingers he found himself fully occupied, yet he listened. But what he heard did not repay the exertion, so he turned just as the covers were drawn off the face, and the features with a pinched look he had never seen before startled him, if such a thing could be done. She slowly stretched out her long slender hand and dipped one finger in the water upon the table, moistened her lips and moved them as if she would speak, not to her daughter, for she never turned her eyes toward where she was sitting, but to Ralph. Not moved by pity, but a desire to bring the interview to a close as soon as possible, because he must see Miss Ray back to Chapel Street, he stepped to the cot and leaned over her. She whispered, "Alone with Margaret." To this he was forced to assent, yet it did not accord with his own feelings, for he wanted to see the sting the revelations would give the proud beauty; so with one more triumphant glance toward her he closed, rather sulkily, the door behind him.

"Alone with Margaret" she was, and how could she break the silence? If the girl would only show some sympathy, some pity; if she would kneel beside her and take her hand; if she would even sit upon the cot; but she would not so much as draw near. The spell must be broken, or she could not do what she so longed to do —turn her face from the light, and die. She could not till she had spoken, till she had sounded her child's heart to see if there was an ember there that could be fanned

to flame, that would strive to shed its heat upon lives that she herself had chilled.

Margaret sat with eyes fixed upon the floor, hands clasped tightly and nervously in her lap, steeling her heart to whatever good might seek for outlet, for she kept the one thought before her mind—"She left me to strangers." At last the woman said with a piteous look in her eyes, a pleading in her voice, "Margaret, where is your heart?"

"I never had one," was the quick reply, while the eyes never raised themselves.

"And yet so young and so beautiful," and the mother cast admiring glances upon her, which showed that vanity when younger had been one of her strong faults, and was, even now, asserting itself, for she saw in her daughter much of her own lost beauty.

"I am called so," came rather mechanically in reply to the last assertion; the first was self-evident.

"Do you know it is dangerous to be beautiful when you have no family to protect you?" began the mother again after long silence.

"I have what is better than that," came again laconically.

"What do you mean, child? what can you mean?" and the sick woman propped herself upon one elbow while she leaned over the cot and as near the still statue-like figure as she could. "You have not been in London long; you have had no visitors; you have seen no one but your attorney, and he—"

"And he is my husband," interrupted Margaret.

The piteous look was gone; the wildness came back; the fever flushed the cheeks, and strength came for the time. She sprang from the cot, put her hand under the girl's chin and turned her face upward.

"You shall look at me; you shall! I will see for myself if you are not playing this iciness." One glance and she fell back murmuring, "Too cold, too cold! There would be no love, no care there for him. I am lost! lost!" she shrieked, and drawing the covers about her, lay still, save the panting, the convulsive breathing.

When the excitement in a measure had abated she began again, but with a reckless air that boded no good,

"Why did you take such a step?"

"Because there was none other before me."

"Ha! that is worthy of your inheritance. I am your mother—my note told you that. I hoped you might have mercy for me, but you have none. I had intended to tell you a story that I thought would move you to make restitution in a mother's name, but all hope is gone, so, what will I do? what, but help you to be Lady of Ivandale, heiress of Major Ray's estate. Do you know who I am? Ha! when I tell you, you will look at me! I am or I was the wife of Richard Ray," to say this cost her a terrible effort, a struggle as if with something that would seal her lips, but she overcame it and continued, "And you are Margaret Ray. Wait till some one comes who can take what I say. I sent for a lawyer; yes, it must be left for proof, he will soon be—"

"He is here," said the voice of Samuel Thump from the doorway. "We rapped, but you did not hear us," and he entered followed by Mother Susan with a basket of comforts upon her arm.

"Are you a lawyer, sir; are you the son of that woman? She has been good to me, and I can trust you." Her lips trembled, her features softened a little as she looked at Miss Thump's happy face, but the good intentions, if there were any, were soon crushed when she looked upon the beautiful face beside the cot which showed life, animation now, upon the entrance of strangers, especially of one who was gallant and gracious, handsome and pleasing. Mr. Thump took Mother Susan's basket, and sat for her the only chair unoccupied, while he stood near, quite at ease, despite the beautiful features that were turned so that he could well see them without rudely gazing.

The woman was somewhat abashed for a moment, took a sip from the cup of gruel, and the wildness seemed intensified by the strength given to body by this, and a few drops of cordial Miss Thump poured out from a little bottle she held in her hand.

"I am ready to begin my story." As she said this,

she put up her hand as if motioning some fancy of the brain backward, down—something she was overcoming, was it good or evil?—she mastered it; "I am—am Mary Ray, wife once of—of—" and before she could say it, she put her hands over her eyes and held them tightly.

"Of Richard Ray, you were saying as we came in," suggested Mr. Thump, full of sympathy for what he supposed an innocently suffering woman.

At the name she looked up, nodded assent, "and this—this," pointing to the pretty figure, no longer stiff and still, but moving slightly, gracefully on the hard wooden chair, "is my daughter Margaret — Margaret Ray, the heiress of Ivandale, and pounds by the thousands at Wenham."

"And the one for whom I am seeking," said Mr. Thump, glancing smilingly at the beautiful face which returned his look, but with a dignity that he thought very fitting for one in the place she would soon be, if this woman's words were true. He thought of Mr. Hansom's assurance that she would appear when wanted, and that chance had nothing to do with their work—but just what else to call it he did not see. However, he took a cautionary view of the case, and would demand proof beyond cavil, before asserting right for a stranger, for although everything about the daughter was pleasing, and in keeping, there was something about the mother that brought not conviction with her words; yet this might be attributed to weakness from her disease, or the false strengthening of Mother Susan's drops. Whether Margaret Ray thought she was listening to the truth or not, one could not tell; she took but little interest either way, but showed more perhaps when the lawyer continued, "But I shall need some written proof of your words—and you also said you had a story to tell."

"So I have," she whispered hoarsely, "so I have, and a sad one too," and she put up her clasped hands and raised her eyes as if imploring mercy of the same fancy for her daughter's sake. The mother must have had some love for the unloving child; must have wanted even at the risk of her own soul's suffering, to save her, if she could, from a fate like hers.

"And that must be told to substantiate her claim," suggested Mr. Thump, as if to remind her of the legal measure that must be taken, "and to save your strength, let me tell you it must be given before a justice to be recognized before the court, so let me beg you to rest while I go out and seek such. If I had known the nature of your desire for calling in legal advice, I should have come with one, but I thought it was merely something to be bequeathed, for which you solicited my aid, which would have been gladly given. So, now, do not exert yourself, but remain quiet till I return. This is a matter of vital importance," and he made ready to go, but she motioned a dissent, and when she could speak, said,

"Not to-day, not to-day, I am not strong enough. To-morrow—to-morrow will do; I shall live till then," she added, for she saw a questioning look in his face as he watched her quick breath and burning cheeks. "The fever comes, but it goes. If you do not believe me, you shall see. Margaret, open that—here is the key—" she motioned toward the little chest near the head of the cot —"take out a book." The daughter did as bidden. The woman turned to the lawyer, as if she would have him take it. As he did so, he noted the bearing, the ease, the refinement about the girl, which was charming indeed, but he forgot it all when he opened the book—he started back with an exclamation of surprise; it was the lost record of Wenham's little church. It contained the marriage of Richard Ray and Mary Seebold. It contained the birth of Margaret Ray, and he saw that Ivandale's mistress would be eighteen on the twentieth of December. It was now after the middle of November.

"But the mere record could be in the keeping of any one," said he.

"I have it all—all you—she needs—but she is so beautiful," she murmured the last to herself, and as if to conciliate the "fancy" that was still hovering around. "I cannot show them now, to-morrow—to-morrow. Do not leave me alone; somebody will stay, I cannot bear it," and putting both hands again tightly over her eyes she shuddered and sank back unconscious.

Mr. Thump laid away the book, locked the chest with the key, had a few words with Mother Susan, who said she would remain, for awhile at least, as she began bathing the temples and chafing the hands, while he turning to Miss Ray asked her where she could be seen, for he might, if the claim could be established, as he now had no doubt it could be, find it necessary to call upon her.

She hesitated, and then instead of directly answering, said she had been summoned there that morning and the relationship made known to her for the first time, but that she could be seen at No. 40 Chapel Street.

Supposing, of course, that she would remain with her mother and soothe her at least, he bade her good morning and passed out to stumble on the stairs over Ralph Speeder, who had been a careful listener to all, and had heard Miss and Mr. Thump in time to avoid them when they came in, but was not so fortunate when the latter went out, who demanded of him what he was doing, when to his surprise he was told that he was waiting to take Miss Ray home.

Astonished even more at this than at what he had heard, the lawyer hurried to No. 4 of the court, rapped loudly several times, but no response came; so knowing other matters needed him at his office, he hastened along Mayfair, and was turning into Friar's way when, looking back, he saw some distance behind him Ralph Speeder, and the closely veiled face and figure of Miss Ray beside him.

Shocked at the heartlessness in leaving her mother, and puzzled at the fortitude it must take for refinement to bear such company, he kept on, more anxious than ever to see Mr. Hansom. When he reached his office even greater surprise awaited him. Mr. Trout smilingly called him for a private interview; informed him with much suavity, many seekings of the imaginary dust bit, much smoothing of the lustrous broadcloth, many expressions of high esteem for the partner and regrets at severing business relations, that he was about to leave for Wenham and Quelton, where properties awaited his wife, who bore the maiden name of Margaret Ray,

and that the attendant cases of the same properties would be all that he needed for employment. Mr. Thump mastered his surprise, congratulated him, and remarked that he had heard of these estates, yet thought there was a link missing in the chain.

"Do you mean this?" said the wily Trout blandly smiling as he laid down the veritable paper which craft and cunning had so ably helped him to make—a certificate of marriage between Mary Seebold and Richard Ray. It was well done and not easily to be detected. "My wife has long held it—left by her mother, who, you know, destroyed herself."

Mr. Thump murmured something about having heard of it, and asked when the partnership was to be dissolved.

Whenever he pleased, Mr. Trout answered, and if he chose, his name could still be retained, but, of course, he would expect a small share of the profits. Mr. Thump declined the latter, and pleading urgent business stepped into his own private room.

Mr. Trout put on his surtout and sought his bride.

CHAPTER XLIII.

IN WHICH DIVERS POINTS ARE MADE FOR DIVERS PEOPLE.

Miss Thump, we said, had a thought that came to her upon the night of the disclosure concerning the case in which Samuel was engaged, and so did it expand that from taking a form and shape in her dreams, which were necessarily at all times shadowy, it grew to appear before her in broad daylight, and as pretty a picture it became as she ever cared to look upon, and the best of all was, it never gave good Susan one doubt of its ever growing proud and turning from her. She saw what Samuel did not, and she wondered that he could not. She sat rocking and knitting, but often passing her hand gently over some imaginary stuff, which must have been

delicate, for her fingers moved daintily and paused as if in one corner to trace something; she had even communicated her suspicions, but none of the story to Miss Hamper, that is, suspicions that something would bring something else to light, all of which seemed so vague from turret to foundation to practical Mother Martha that she only said, she hoped it might be, but did not see any immediate prospect.

However, the thought would not leave Miss Thump, and she was endeavoring to devise some way of acting upon it when came the scene upon the third floor, last house at the end of Blue Bottle Court, which quite astounded her, and for a time put her fancies to flight.

She remained with the sick woman whom Miss Ray, pleading pressing engagements, left before she became conscious. Susan not a whit objected, but eyeing her sharply, said to herself, "Humph, there's something wrong here; a mother don't leave a daughter so many years, and a daughter don't leave a mother so soon after she's found her if all's as it should be."

So she bowed stiffly to Miss Ray, who was glad to get away, although for mere decency's sake she said she would return and watch with her mother as soon as she was at liberty to do so. The truth was, she feared Mr. Trout might call and finding her absent might become alarmed, for he knew that she was a stranger to all the streets of London. But that gentleman, as we have seen, was still at his office, where, after arranging matters satisfactorily to himself, as we have also seen, betook himself to Chapel Street and found Mrs. Trout quite as lovely as ever, although with a little pallor which was exceedingly becoming.

She had preceded him long enough to calm somewhat her nerves, although one would never know by outward appearance that they had ever been in any other state than that of the utmost quietude, to do away with all trace of the hearty cry she had taken when she found herself freed from the disagreeable presence of Ralph Speeder and alone on the second floor end room, to sit after it all, thoughtfully enough to decide what to do; whether to tell Mr. Trout or whether not to. She hated

him, and he was her husband; she hated the woman she had seen, and she was her mother. She hated Ralph Speeder and yet had accompanied him to Blue Bottle Court, even though she had not made his acquaintance.

She was pleased, charmed with Mr. Thump, yet she would not dare entertain him, even in a legal calling, that is, not until she was more sure how well and steadily she could draw the reins over the man that yesterday had given her the right to call husband. So after all these thoughts and feelings had held sway each in turn, it is not surprising that the roses upon her cheeks were not bright.

Mr. Trout advanced upon her entrance with quite the bold assurance of a man meeting his wife. He needed now not the strength the fob with its great seal imparted; his knees were not inclined to bend, nor the hand to seek the smooth bald head. He smiled blandly as he advanced, took her hand, but did not sigh over it—that was a necessity of the past now; so, after looking around the room, well at both doors—the one leading into the passage and the one behind which Mrs. Mutter had once stationed herself, and cast a tantalizing glance at the portrait of the late Mr. Mutter—he kissed her; but that she returned his loving and spouse-like salutation there is some doubt to this day existing in the mind of the writer, for she turned very much as if she had been a walking, waxen doll, and when near enough to a chair sat down and motioned him to take one very near her. He looked somewhat surprised, but not at all abashed, remembering what the beadle had placed in his hand the day before. He had heard of matrimonial differences, of lectures after companions had been too convivial to the wifely taste, but twenty-four hours could have not possibly engendered the first, and the last there could be no need of, for he was a strictly temperate man, so he did her bidding, but with the independence of a husband not to be awed.

She had before been perfectly indifferent to the success of her claims, but to look at the matter in all its bearings was one and the chief reason why she had shown so little interest at the revelations her mother had

made; and upon reflection she resolved to join her skill to that of her husband and play a desperate game, although as yet she could not clearly see the why it should be necessary, but if she were defeating nobody but the Crown there could be no harm done. She had beauty, and with money, and her own, too, life with Selwyn Sellers Trout might not be so intolerable. So, when that gentleman was seated beside her, she began in a low tone which sounded, the groom thought, a little threatening.

"My dear Sell, you married me yesterday, partly because my face is not an unpleasant one, chiefly because you thought I was the heiress to property invaluable, and if not you could make me so by your skill in weaving much out of nothing. I married you—well, I may as well be frank, we shall both be the happier for a fair understanding in the beginning—I married you because I saw nothing better to do. Do I love you? quite as much as you love me. You admire my face and love what I shall possess if I become mistress of Ivandale. I respect your age and need some one to care for my needs if I remain penniless. Thus we stand toward each other. It is useless to be sentimental, for we neither of us mean it. That was well enough yesterday morning when you visited me, for we were so-called lovers; to-day it is not needed, and at heart distasteful to both, for we are married. I have something to tell you which will no doubt both astonish and delight you; but let me warn you not to be too certain. I am not. But let me assure you of my hearty aid in establishing myself heiress to all that I can. It is the first time I have cared to do so—listen," and she recounted the events of the morning truthfully, but not so minutely as to include Mr. Thump or the part he played, but she did speak of Miss Thump, and the name fell with a weight upon the ear of Mr. Trout.

It had been his intention to journey slowly and pleasantly to Wenham and gradually instruct Mrs. Trout upon what she should know and what she should say relative to her past life and childish reminiscences, and at Wenham to gather himself what was necessary re-

garding the family of Major Ray, and so well train her that she—armed with the contract that craft and cunning had supplied him with—could present herself, if need be, before a court, and show her own right. The beautiful face and graceful form would do much, he knew, towards dispelling the doubts, if there were any, of this court, but to his intense surprise he found she would not need his aid—on the contrary he might be forced to call upon hers. But this woman, the mother of his wife—could it be true that she was still living, and could it be that with so little effort he should be possessed of a pretty wife and a handsome estate at almost the same time? truly he was a lucky man if one was to be found, and for her calmness and frankness, he thought he began to see in her what he might actually love—but it was a feeling far from akin to love; it was only a respectful awe which every man has for a woman who is capable of outwitting him or anyone else. So he expressed his great satisfaction at the turn things had taken, thanked her for her proffered assistance which he knew would be of great value, but he wisely held his peace regarding their reasons for marriage; he neither acquiesced in, nor contradicted her statements, and as in all their after life they acted upon these hypotheses, it is to be supposed that he accepted them. So, after agreeing to take her next morning to Blue Bottle Court, and if things developed as they hoped, to start at once for Wenham, he arose, for he heard Zeke opening the street door, and, lest it might be an "happlerkant," and thus bring them under the gaze of Mrs. Mutter, took her hand, pressed it to his lips in a gallant way—upon which act Mr. Mutter looked from behind the gauze quite cynically; he had been sold into bondage, but death had been merciful—bowed low and with hat in hand retreated to the passage-way and walked out while Zeke held open the door. Pleased beyond measure with his wife, and annoyed with himself for what he had said and shown to Mr. Thump, he went to his lodgings and there awaited the morrow.

Mr. Thump sat busy in hand with points to be made for other clients, but his mind would wander to the in-

terview of the morning. Mr. Hansom had promised he would call in, and in time he did. Stump, stump up the stairway came the ebony cane and its master, whose voice was soon heard without; he hastened to open for him the door. The elderly gentleman in cheery tones saluted him and sat down again with the aid of the cane, in the same leather-covered chair he had occupied twice before.

"We came," said he, after taking breath, "Owlie and I, just to look in upon you, sir, but if there is no need of our tarry—I see you are at work upon points for other folks—we'll make it short, sir, very short."

"There is great and pressing need, I assure you, Mr. Hansom," returned the lawyer with a serious air and face.

"Ah, ah, then, if I tarry, I will make myself more comfortable, sir, with your permission," and the hat was carefully removed from the mongrel curls, which were put in place, if perchance any of them had fallen where they would make too much weight, and consequently it might be a disarranging of them all, the velvet cape was unclasped and thrown off his shoulders. "Now then, Owlie, are we ready, eh? I think so; yes, quite ready. Do you still find chance at work, or are you getting scruples and want to give up the case? You are an honest man, and will tell me the truth, I know, sir.

"To answer your first question, Mr. Hansom," replied the lawyer, bringing from behind his ear the quill he had been using, and depositing it upon the rack, "I will say that I do not know what to call it that is at work with us—whether chance or not, but it seems to me there is a power; yet I have not made up my mind what to call it."

"And never mind so long as we win, sir; only don't call it chance, sir; don't call it chance," broke in the elderly gentleman, turning the golden bird upon Mr. Thump.

"And as to the last question," went on the lawyer, without heeding the interruption, "I have not the least intention so long as you are satisfied with my services, to let go the case. Now, I have something to tell you, that came to my eyes and ears this morning."

"Listen, Owlie, listen; glitter, glisten, glow, and burn, too," cried Mr. Hansom eagerly, as he drew his chair a little nearer the table, and felt as if for the safety of his beard.

Minutely Mr. Thump recounted the scene, the words, the gestures, the efforts of the sick woman; the indifference, the pride, the beauty, the grace of Miss Ray; the finding of the same man outside waiting for her, who had called with the letter for Mr. Trout; then his interview with that gentleman and the announcement he had made.

To all Mr. Hansom listened and replied with a merry twinkling in the gray eyes, "Glad, sir, glad to hear this. I knew of Margaret Ray, sir, but left her for you to find, and you have. Yes, but Mr. Trout found her first, and that only makes one of my points, too, that he was plotting with Marplot and against us. It has come at last, what I have long looked for. Now watch—if Mr. Trout leaves with Mrs. Trout for Wenham, let me know at once. If this woman tells her story to-morrow and brings other papers to light, let me know at once, sir, at once. In the meantime tighten on Marplot. Have ready, sir, writ, warrant, or whatever you call it, to take him, and have an officer to read it to him in plain, clear English, so he will know what it means. Leave out all the wherefores, therefores, and whereases you can, and yet keep it legal, and have him capped, sir, and remanded. No bail; no, sir, no bail. Listen, have it ready, but don't serve it till we hear what she says; if she can't tell to-morrow, sir, she will next day. Mark me, sir, mark me, we are all safe, and our client—did you ever see a prettier face than she has? and you may call her proud if you will, but it is the right kind of pride, sir, and a pride that's becoming. I have heard of her, yes, beautiful she is and graceful, and a lady—a lady, eh, Owlie? Things are working so well. I am pleased, sir, but do not hold Mr. Trout for complicity in enticing Maria Ray to London; let him go till the case is clearer, poor fellow. I must laugh," and the curls danced, the beard shook as Mr. Hansom did laugh more heartily than Mr. Thump thought he could.

"That is a relief, for I did not think him guilty,"

said Mr. Thump, "and he seems so happy in his new venture."

"And as we all wish him much joy, we will go, Owlie and I. Go on with the points for others; we are all right, sir, and a pretty client she is; a worthy one, too, but proud, yes, proud, but good when you know her," and he drew on the cloak, put on the hat, leaned heavily upon Owlie, brought his bowed form as near perpendicular as he could, assuring Mr. Thump that Isaac Harold or himself could be found at No. 4 Blue Bottle Court at any time now, bade him good morning with great glee, and stump, stump, stump went the ebony cane down the stairs.

Let us go back to the early morning, when Meg was putting in order the room of the mother of Margaret Ray. Snatcher lay in waiting for somebody; she had an expectant look as the heave brought her up where she could see along the quay and along the street leading from it, and presently came the tall form of Mr. Wallace, and beside him the uncouth, ungainly figure of Peleg Hamper. The latter, with one of the paddles he carried on his shoulder, leaned over and drew the boat nearer. They both jumped in; she was loosened from her moorings, the prow turned to mid-stream, from there up—up—in long strokes, where the way was clear; she was carried forward, in short strokes, where many craft were near. The sail was not spread, for they were not going hither and thither at the whim of the wind, but up, up they sped to some particular spot; and when they had reached it as near as possible, Mr. Hamper let the paddles rest a little, only used them enough to keep from drifting down again.

"Mister Wallace," said he, with the same air of determination upon his face that he wore when he led Meg to Miss P. Barley's, called for that lady and boldly sat and trimmed the sail that took the child on a musical voyage, "I told ye, days back, as I'd a story to tell ye, an' it was so doubtin' if I 'ud find ye at Jericho that I sed we'd take a pull up stream. I told ye o' the first, un Jane an' me 'ooked in, an' 'ow it war we got inter the way on it. Ye rekellect, sir?"

Mr. Wallace nodded assent and clenched his fists tightly as he looked into the water.

"Well, this war the spot, so near as I ken tell," went on Peleg rapidly lest the courage to heave the whole cargo might desert him. "Ye rekellects, too, I sed Snatcher war oneasy-like an' steered to *it*—that be the woman I means that we took in—but I didn't tell ye that we couldn't turn 'er about, she 'ud go cross stream, spite o' all the cap'n—ye know Jane war cap'n that night—could do—an' what did she steer to? D'ye see that cove? d'ye see, Mister Wallace?" and he bent eagerly forward with his stiff grimed forefinger outstretched, his hat brim knocked up, while his eyes seemed to behold again what they had on that night fifteen years before.

He was silent for a moment and then continued in a whisper, "There war anchored the sweetest, cleanest little thing ye ever see'd—rolled in a cloak, an' sound asleep, as if the foul water war clean an' 'ad never a took the mother o' the young thing from 'er. Jane got out an' took 'er in 'er arms, an' I never seed Jane so tender like an' lovin' as she war then an' ever arter to the child. An' settin' down in Snatcher agin, never touched 'and to a paddle, sir; she war a woman, then, ye see—there war a child to keer for. She pinted to me to pull down stream, then nodded to the woman in the bottom o' the boat, then to the wee thing in 'er arms. 'She shipped without 'er,' war all she sed, an' hugged tighter the bundle. We 'ad Gaff then, an' Jane loved 'im, but some'ow this child 'ad a way that war more winnin', ye see, Mister Wallace; it war 'er build that made 'er so. Well, we got back to the quay, ye might a' thought it 'ard pullin', but it warn't. Snatcher cut the water like a bird. Jane took the child to Wreckers, an' I kep' lookout on the body till they war astir at the dead-'us, an' ye knows the rest; I told ye that. But the child—that be what I pulled up stream for this mornin'. I wants to talk about 'er.

"When I found Jane she 'ad looked 'er well over; 'er covers war the tenderest ye ever see. Around 'er waist war a bit o' cloth sewed inter a 'old, an' in it war money,

fer the breedin' o' the poor thing, I sed. I took it out, an' Jane an' me tried to figger 'ow much it war, but we couldn't make clear sailin' on it arter two 'undred poun' ; so, says I, 'Jane, the Wreckers might be good in the long run, an' thar might be bad 'uns among 'em, an' it beent safe to bear sich a 'eavy cargo ; we'll watch fer any that might come to the un we 'ooked in, an' if we see they look fair, we'll tell 'em what we found, but if not we'll keep 'er, an' I'll put this war other folks does that 'ave pouns a bit 'efty'.

"Jane nodded an' got right up an' looked at the sleepin' thing, an' then beckoned to me to come too.

"Well, it war a pretty sight as I ever wants to pull up to. I ken see it now, an' I've seed it so many, many nights o' late. She war under full sail, jist takin' as quiet a voyage sleepin' as if she'd been in 'er mother's bed. 'Er 'ead war on 'er arm, an' 'er arm war trimmed an' rigged so neat that ye could tell the whole craft war no common build. So we watched at the dead-'us till the cart took *'er* away, an' nobody come as took any interest in 'er, 'xcept the un that come to look at t'other clean un, and the un that wants the papers from Gaff. I knew by 'is rig 'e warn't the un to tow 'er, an' yet I never put my mind so much on un as I 'ave sense t'other sweet, clean un war 'ooked in, an' 'e begun a cruisin' arter me—for 'e do it, I sees 'im, night arter night, when 'e don't see me. I told ye I'd let ye know when I 'ad a pull alongside o' 'im, but some'ow I can't do it, mister, no, I can't. 'E wants to pull up, an' I see it, an' think I'll 'eave to an' lay quiet till 'e comes, but I can't, I can't. So besides the what I 'ad to tell o' the child I 'ad that to say, I can't talk to 'im."

"And it may be just as well, Mr. Hamper ; I am not so anxious about an interview between you two as I was, and for that reason I have not been to the river of late. Isaac Harold told you that I was too busy to come," said Mr. Wallace, as Peleg paused to take breath and pull a little up, for they were drifting down, and he determined to keep near the spot, as if for inspiration and courage.

"Yes, 'e told me, an' then I felt more'n ever I must.

So I tried agin last night 'e war 'ere, but I could'nt—no use, suthin' draws me back, an' 'olds me taut, an' then I git to worritin' over the child. But I must go back to the time when we took 'er in tow. I found a port that 'ud keep the poun's an' give me suthin' fer the keepin' on 'em ; an' why, I never could yet git a clear grip on, but I didn't say nothin' agin it, an' so ye see we took keer o' the mite an' let the poun's lay at anchor ; so by the time the young thing war ready for letters, figgers, an' manners, we 'ad suthin' to 'old the sail with. Jane shipped, as I told ye, an' then Marthy, Sister Marthy, bided with us, an' they be a 'appy pair together. An' uncle—that be what the child calls me. I never can tell 'ow it be that the child done it, but she be master o' every bit o' this old craft, an' if she comes trippin' to the quay an' says, 'Uncle, I must pull a bit with ye,' I never feels the ache in the bones then ; I turns the prow to mid-stream an' feels like a new craft. If she looks sorry, I lays it right to 'eart an' carries a 'eavy cargo till I sees 'ers lightened. An' she be a carryin' a 'eavier un now than she can steer well under—I sees it, an' knows it, an' it makes me 'old to the jib sometimes," and at this he put his hand upon his head as if in pain.

He was silent a few moments and then continued: "It gits so full o' wind up thar when I thinks o' it, that I comes nigh capsizin'. Ye see she be built, trimmed, and rigged to sail with the finest, an' Samuel Thump, o' Lunley Lane—mebbe ye've 'eard o' im?"

Mr. Wallace replied that he had, but ventured no remarks, for he was listening with body bent forward and eyes fixed upon Mr. Hamper to catch every gesture and every word.

"'E wants 'er to sail with 'im," continued Peleg, "an' she beent loth to do it, but she won't, an' I say it be right, till she can show 'er colors an' er name, but it be 'ard fer 'er to do, an' it be 'ard fer Samuel, an' I am not so hearty as I war, an' the poun's be shiftin out o' the port fast, fer she 'ave so many needs now, so it be no wonder I feels worrit, an' thar be no un else I could tell it to—this that I knows—she be a born leddy, an' we must find the port she 'ailed from. I thinks ye can ; she be

o' age soon; it be figgered on a paper I found on 'er I'll give you 'er rig that she 'ad on when we got 'er, an' the paper," and he drew from under the great loose coat he wore a package, and handed it to Mr. Wallace. "The cloak we some'ow left ashore on the cove, an' I pulled up fer it next day, but it war gone, in course. It breaks my 'eart to do this, fer if Meg — that be 'er name, I didn't tell ye —'ud sail away in to waters that I be on-easy in, what could I do but go to Jane? Now, Mister Wallace, do all ye can to find 'er name an' colors. She be proud an' says to Samuel, 'It'll never be till I know it.' It be right, but it be a 'eavy cargo for the young thing. Now, I've told ye the most, but not as good as I meant for; but ye can see it takes 'eavy strokes o' the 'eart to do it."

Mr. Wallace took the package, and bidding Mr. Hamper still keep Snatcher near the spot, broke the cord that held it — Martha Hamper had tied it years before when the clothes had been thrown aside by reason of their limited space to hold the hearty, happy little Meg, who grew day by day as if she had nothing else to do, and a deal of that. He laid them out upon his lap piece by piece, gently, tenderly, as a mother would the worn robes of a dead child: he examined them carefully; there was no mark upon them, but the paper— that he seized, and as he read the drops stood upon his forehead, though the air was cold; his hand trembled, though the words were few.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed in a voice of soul-felt gratitude, but it lightened not the shadow on the troubled face of Peleg Hamper; he saw the time was coming when Meg would go out from the court and return no more.

"Ye look, mister, as if it war suthin' y'd been cruisin' arter," at last came from him, for Mr. Wallace said no more, but sat gazing as if he dreamed—and so he did —but his dreams were happier now than they had been for years.

"Yes," he replied looking up like one just awakened, and yet he had heard what Mr. Hamper had said. "Yes," and if Meg would be happier, tell her; you will

soon know who she is, and may give Samuel Thump a hope that her family and birth will soon be clear. But you call her Meg. How is that?"

"That be the name she called 'erself," returned Peleg, drawing the broad brim over his eyes, and turning Snatcher about. "I thought I'd like to see the way clear afore 'er, an' so I does, so I does, but—but—when she be gone from the court"—and he drew the rough sleeve across his eyes, while the great strong form was shaken with the sobs that he could not choke down.

"If she is what I think she is, Mr. Hamper," said Mr. Wallace in comforting tones, "you will never find any change in her."

"But she'll be gone from the court."

"And may take you with her."

"'Ud she tow a 'ulk like me—she, the sweetest cleanest craft on the water?" he murmured to himself as he took the paddles with lighter heart and hand and rowed down to the quay again, where they parted after Mr. Wallace had slidden into the large open pocket of Peleg's coat a note—similar to the one upon the Bank of England which Isaac had taken to Miss Thump—and assured him that he should hear from him as soon as he found out anything leading to the establishing of the girl as anybody but Meg Hamper. The clothing and paper he had tied again and given to him with the injunction to keep them till he should call for them. He walked hurriedly to Blue Bottle Court.

Isaac had returned, but as we said not until Mr. Thump, Miss Ray, and Ralph Speeder had passed out of it. And after this Mr. Hansom found his way to the office in Lunley Lane.

The next morning came and brought Mr. Trout to Mrs. Mutter's. Mrs. Trout having said nothing to Ralph Speeder concerning further need of his services, he did not appear to her, but he might have been found then, and many mornings after, in a closet he had discovered in the dark passage leading to the flight to which Mrs. Trout ascended, but not Mr. Trout; he sat in the fly, for they took one, and if he was needed, that vehicle being stationed around the corner, he could soon present

himself with his wife. But he had not long to wait; she soon returned saying the woman—she did not call her mother — was in the delirium of fever, and till it had passed there was no hope of her story being told. So day after day they went, the fever was slowly decreasing, but the exhaustion was great; not one delicacy did she take, not one shilling did she offer; if either was ever thought of she said to herself "she left me to strangers."

Meantime the honest and well-reputed Trout kept himself away from Lunley Lane. His messages to Mr. Thump were to the effect that he was arranging personal affairs and in a few days would call to make final settlements of any matters pertaining to their late partnership. The truth was his confidence in his scheme had been too great, and he knew it; he had not been discreet, and he saw it; yet if it put a more plausible look upon things he should say that his wife supposed her mother dead. But the certificate, that was the tell-tale. He had shown it to Mr. Thump, a man who could detect fraud and then pursue it. Craft and cunning had made it, and left him to use it unaided. If the mother of Margaret held one and Mr. Thump should hear of it, as no doubt he would, through the all-knowing Mother Susan, one might be pronounced a forgery, and suspicion be thrown upon the other. So the wily Trout was in troubled waters. The vaults subterranean had in some one of the suspicious moods of the late Lord Radnor been made the deposit of papers which were of little moment in the present case, although an inheritor would of course claim them; they were deeds, claims made and claims liquidated, genealogies, etc., a thousand and one things which a family of lineage and title should hold. It was among these that the lawyer had found a certificate of marriage, for it must be known that Major Ray had claimed the crest and title of Radnor upon Mary Seebold's name; this he knew, and that he copied in scroll and curve, and from it had made what he had exhibited with so much blandness to Mr. Thump. From these family records he had also learned much that he should deem it necessary to also instruct Mrs. Trout upon when they should be in Wenham.

The bait was golden, but the swimming with it difficult. There are men by the score who would have laid claim, proved it, possessed and fled while he was waiting —looking for the speck, the dust bit, the bubble, and losing the main thing.

At last, one morning, the woman said she felt able to speak. The lawyer, Mr. Thump came; the magistrate came. Mrs. Trout made her usual daily call, and, of course, this time remained. Mother Martha and Mother Susan were already there. She was propped up, looked about calmly, and then said to Margaret, "Your husband, where is he?" So Mr. Trout was summoned from the fly, and came at once blandly into the presence of Mr. Thump.

Mr. Wallace saw them all pass in, but his heart was heavy. The little room of the one-storied dwelling was darkened, the black silk cap had been removed, and small sacks of ice had taken its place, the breathing was long-drawn and ended often in a low moan; the slender hand clutched nervously, but involuntarily at the snow-white covers of the little cot upon which Isaac Harold lay unconscious. There was little to do, the doctors said, till sense returned, but to keep the utmost stillness about him. Great Heart sat by him, but he did not know it; dearie looked pityingly down upon him, but his eyes were closed; the green-grocer from the corner had seen the medical attendants go in and come out, and had stolen in to ask tearfully what he could do. Nothing, nothing but wait till he should open his eyes, for a brief time in this life, or unseal them only when in the other.

The night before, he and Great Heart had been sitting before the glowing coals, talking of Joe's return, which they hoped for in a day or two, but should be sure of before another week had passed. Isaac was merry and expectant at times, and at times quiet and sad, looking into the embers and tracing, as he told Great Heart, a toilsome journey to gatherings before him. When evening was well advanced, and he had put on the teapot for a cup before retiring, he sat on the *prie-dieu* with bowed head, which he suddenly lifted, and turned towards the window that looked out upon the court.

His face grew purple, his eyes started from their sockets, his hand, which he had extended, stiffened, and he fell upon the ground.

Great Heart started, looked at the window, and saw there a face that had once been beautiful; he recognized it, and before he could beckon it to remain, it vanished. He read the cause of Isaac's attack and sorrowfully lifted him upon the cot, summoned from the Blue Bottle tavern a messenger to whom he gave a note signed by a name that brought the best medical skill London could offer, to the humble court, and he never left him for a moment.

Poor Harold! it was his last gathering on earth; one look at that face, after so many years of anxious search, weighed down the sack so that he sank beneath it.

The portals were already turning upon their hinges, slowly, softly but surely, making ready to swing wide open for the entrance of this patient, long-suffering, yet always hopeful soul.

CHAPTER XLIV.

TREATS CHIEFLY OF WIND AND WATER.

THE blind man had not been seen at the corner of the Wilton and Lunley since Joe had started for Quelton, and this fact gave still stronger foundation to Mr. Thump's suspicions. But legal gentlemen being given much to theorizing, it may be that the extra wrap which the mendicant wore for several mornings previous to the final one, was not sufficiently warm to protect what he said were his rheumatic joints—for it was an old coat. True, it had been of good appearance once, but it was fast fitting itself for the last hook upon which it would hang—that of the rag-picker—or it may be, that after having done his work he was enabled to retire and live upon the pence and half-pence dropped in his hat; at all events, he was not to be seen, and the fact was not un-

noted by Miss Thump also. And here let us say, that that good lady, with a small part of the twenty-pound note sent her, had bought, planted, watered, and weeded upon the grave of Maria, some of the choicest blooms that would grow outside of the even temperature of the hot-house, and before the first frost could harm them, they were neatly potted and safely housed in her own little cottage, to be tended, pruned, and trained for next year's re-setting. In her visits to the grave, she had almost always had the company of Meg, who still had a tearful eye and sobbing breast at the thought of the fair and beautiful face beneath.

Of late, it will be seen that Susan had been very busy in attendance upon the mother of Margaret Ray, for she and Martha had taken by turns and together, the entire charge of her. The night after the story of her life had been related in the presence of the magistrate, and by that august functionary had been taken down, sealed, signed by her and by the witnesses, Miss Thump was alone with her. Meg had been kept from seeing her, and so long as she was cared for by others, the girl was content not to look upon her again, so she attended to the household affairs, and thus Mother Martha was at liberty. She had been home in the afternoon for rest and sleep, promising to relieve Susan by nightfall, and by that time the wind had changed from a cool breeze to fitful, searching gusts, one of which blew the outer door in Wreckers Court ajar, and as Miss Hamper arose to close it, she said, "It's chill without to-night, Meg, and I'll take some extra covers, and a small basket of tea, toast, milk, and a very little soup. Too much in a sick-room doesn't do. So, if you will arrange them, I'll run up to the other end of the court, and see how the baby is to-night, if you don't mind, child. I'll only bide long enough to cheer its mother."

She drew a warm silk hood—the work of Meg's fingers—over her head, and a knitted shawl—the work of the same fingers—over her shoulders; and as she passed out quickly, a figure, which had not a frank, free, forward motion, struck suddenly as it could off to the left, and then fetching up against something was off to the

right, and by that time it had, in its diagonal course, reached the street from which the court ran.

She looked after it, but it was too cunning to look after her; it must seem to be in the court upon its own legitimate business, and not notice others who happened to be abroad too. It had come to Wreckers, hoping for a word with Gaff, who either had not kept his promise, or else Ralph Speeder had played false. To be sure the hundred pounds had never been intrusted to his care; there had only been a stipulation to be given in this wise —that the night after the delivery of the papers, the money should be delivered by Marplot in person; so, being uneasy, lest some other had forestalled his offer— and yet could there be anyone who knew that Gaff had them?—he was on the lookout for Gaff, and if he was not to be found there, Peleg might be approached upon the whereabouts of the ring; and not finding them at the quay or near it, he supposed they must be at home, for Snatcher was moored. But he did not see them, though he looked through the clean glass that let the daylight into the sitting-room of the Hampers, and saw there Meg. In gazing at her, he forgot where he was and heeded not the outgoing of Miss Hamper, till she was upon him, and with the oozings of his conscience, each moment multiplying their drops, till they fell in streams down his face and neck, he betook himself away as we have seen.

Not liking the look of the figure, not liking the sneaking way it went, Miss Hamper stood without long enough to leave Meg under the belief that she had been to the other end, and cheered the mother, and then went in. The girl had made ready the basket, folded the cover, and was herself leaning over the drawing of Snatcher, which had been begun so many weeks before.

Mother Martha saw a happy look on her face, and tarried a moment in the doorway to watch her — when Meg, after a stroke here and a dash there, raised the picture and met the kindly eyes upon her, and said, "Mother Martha, I am so glad that I feel just like finishing Snatcher to-night; uncle has been looking for it so long, and whenever I took up my pencil to draw the

water, the marks flowed past, and I could not keep them, and when I tried to read, that dreadful washing, washing carried away the words; but it is gone, Mother Martha, and I am so happy that I do not believe it will ever come back. I shall have this ready for uncle to-night; he says I have put the tired look on her that Snatcher has after a long pull."

"As if a boat could look tired or be tired, Meg," interrupted Miss Hamper with a toss of her head.

"But uncle thinks so, so that it is just as real to him; and I can see it myself, if you do laugh at it."

So, busying herself with sundry household duties, Martha turned from Meg and thus awaited Peleg's return. For she would not leave the girl alone while thinking of the shambling figure and trying to recall where she had seen it, which in the meantime had betaken itself to Poorly's Resort, with a deal of determination now, and all at once a closing of its glands and consequently a giving of the handkerchief ample time to share its moisture with the stuff of which the pocket was made, and the hands being released from the wiping away of the secretions, had opportunity to spread a lunch in the small room.

It was not a lunch sparse in quantity or quality; it was not such a lunch as one would expect to look upon if he should slyly gaze through the narrow, dirty panes upon the bare deal table mottled so thickly with grease from burned-low candles, in times gone by, and from chunks of pork out of pies that had long ceased to be pies, yet had left ample traces that they had once been there. It was a lunch laid for more than one, and yet it did not seem to limit itself to two, nor positively affirm it was spread for three.

There was a jug under the table, and its contents were by no means stinted, if we may infer from the way its owner lifted it there from the cupboard near by; its strength was by no means diminished or diluted, if we may infer by the long inhalations when he took the cork from the mouth, and from the odor it sent through the room. It was strong, not because it was of vulgar inferiority, but it was strong because it was old, because

it was prime; thus much for what was *under* the table. Upon it for a centre-piece was a platter without any rim, but this was not discernible, or rather the loss of the rim was not, except in one place where an unruly and unevenly broken corner would obtrude itself between the contents of the dish as if it were determined to show to the world that the platter was not what it pretended to be, and that it was in duty bound to bear evidence to that fact. But to those who would surround the bare table, the matter of rim or no rim was of little moment; they would not be at all fastidious, and doubtless by the time the ample stock of pies, kidney and mutton, with which the platter was piled, had become so reduced as to disclose the lack of rim, the contents of the jug would be diminished in equal, if not greater proportions, and to their eyes the rimless would become rimmed, and the tell-tale angle would be as likely and more than likely, to be seen playing jack-in-the-box from some one of the pies as quietly protruding from the body of the platter.

The accompaniments to the pies set on either side, were rolls and butter; the latter, an unheard-of luxury in Poorly's Resort, was quietly easing and oozing itself in the warmth and closeness of the atmosphere upon a plate that had once been tin, in fact, it was tin yet, but had lost all semblance to that metal—brightness. The rolls were not pretentious enough to need anything to uphold them but the straw-paper upon which they had been brought from the baker's shop.

It will, no doubt, strike the reader, as it struck those who peeped through the narrow, dirty panes, that it was an odd lunch for those who had been to supper, and who, consequently, would care for less hearty, or more unusual accompaniments to the contents of the jug—which are always cared for whatever the hour of night or the amount already laid in for digestion. It had more the appearance of a lunch for some body or bodies who had not been to supper, and besides might be tired, dusty, and perhaps crusty, and for these what was under the table would prove a most speedy antidote.

Mr. Marplot looked upon the table with great satisfaction. The table and what was spread upon it looked upon Mr. Marplot, but seeing nothing in his repulsive face to satisfy them, they retained the same immovable, expressionless countenances, for not daring to look dissatisfaction it were better to be neutral.

He had lost the terrified look he had an hour or more before; the glands, as we said, were resting, the mind was more at ease, the wickedness within was unbound again to roam whither it would, but only to prepare him for what was speedily at hand.

Rubbing his hands without much trouble, for they were not moist, he said to himself, "Maybe I'm a fool to go near him, but I'd rather have what he's got; it makes surer work. I'll go down again some night and I'll look into the court again. It's fancy, mere fancy—I'm always fancying. I wish I could kill this way I have of fancying till it throws me into a fit. Conscience, I suppose the good folks who leave tracts in Poorly's Resort would call it, but I don't agree with 'em for it's fancy, fancy, nothing else. But my plans will soon be something more than plans, and then I'll have no use for fancy. Trout thinks it's half and half the Ray estate, with a good fat fee for the Ivandale settlement. Ha! let him think. If she, Margaret, gets Ivandale, I can hold what I know over her, and make a good income that way. Yes, she must get Ivandale; things must be worked quickly now. If Mr. Barley is all right—and he can keep so if he is a mind to—I shall push straight on to victory. I've got Trout—'S. S. Trout'—I can see it now. If it was not for the way I get into so often, I could have done this unaided, but I get weak and wet and childish—and all comes from fancy, too. Curse this fancy! I must put my foot on it. I'm strong now—and think of me two hours ago. Bah! what a fool I was. That face! No, no, that was washed out to sea. Years ago the mother came, but *she* didn't. I am like myself now. It's time this minute—he wrote me he'd be here to-night"—and he took out of his pocket a watch; consulted its face, and replacing it, arose and stirred a few feebly burning coals in a still

feebler stove, put a skillet that had long parted with its handle upon the fire and into it poured some water from a pitcher without a nose, so that it could not boast over the skillet, except upon the ground that it was a trifle lighter in color, although by no means white.

This looked as if there was contemplated upon the arrival of the expected guest or guests, a mixture of the contents of the jug, the heating water, and the sugar in the paper bag which he untied, and opened, and set upon the table with a spoon, in some places brass, and in some places something else, but whatever it was, it was not silver, standing most invitingly up as if to say, "Help yourself, help yourself." Near the paper bag he set two long thick glasses and then turned back to the cupboard and brought out, reluctantly, a third. After this last the door swung back on its one hinge, back upon as bare a cupboard as was ever looked into by that renowned personage, Mother Hubbard.

After these final arrangements he turned to the skillet without a handle and then to the coals beneath; they were brightening, so, of course, the water was heating in proportion. But not feeling satisfied with this effort he drew from an old box that contained a pair of disjointed tongs, a shovel in better condition than anything yet found in the room, and a bellows which was so leaky, that work it as rapidly as one could, the air hurried out through the leaks at a breakneck pace, utterly ignoring the nozzle which was its lawful way of exit, and with these he blew the coals. The coals burned feebly, and it was more than probable that this was due as much to an innate inability to do anything else as from lack of flame, and yet after the blowing they seemed to revive, enough at least, to soon cause the skillet's partial removal from directly over them.

So all was ready and awaiting the guest or guests. Marplot listened to every footstep that drew near, hoping it might linger, but all passed by, and he drew again his watch; this time the hand was not so steady and the manner of the whole man was one of less assurance. If closely observed, the glands might be seen to be preparing for work by the shine they were giving the forehead.

He felt all this and knew what it meant — a falling into "that way," as he called it.

"Fancy again," said he clenching his fist and trying to look defiant. "Curse it! curse it! Fancy this is wrong and that's wrong and find out in the end nothing's wrong!" He looked timidly at the wall where he had seen the two the first time we met him in that dingy room. He saw nothing and then looked bolder; began to re-pile the pies and rolls, move the jug an inch or two to the right, push the skillet entirely off the fire, all the time trying to think himself busy from necessity, and all the time listening for every footstep.

"Twelve o'clock! He was due an hour ago and more," and he drew again the watch and interviewed its face. "Curse fan—hark!" one, two, three, a pause; one, two, a pause; one, and catching the candle he hurried softly to the door, but before he opened it he put his mouth to the side and said "Tom?"

"Ha! you're right there," came a cheery voice from without. "Let a fellow in; it's too cold to keep closed doors on your friends."

The bolt was drawn, the key turned, the latch lifted, the candle shielded from the wind that was sifting through the cracks and only waiting for a chance to get enough purchase on the loosely hung door to send it back with a good bang, blow out the flickering dip, and run riot through the halls, sift under the doors and through the keyholes that belonged to the wretched lodgers above who had no fire, perhaps, and what little they had it would whisk out in a twinkling, and finding it could not make things any colder or more uncomfortable generally, slip out through the fissure around the window sashes, which fitted into the casements very much as the small boy fits into his father's boots, and off again to put out more fires, and make more misery among the miserable. All this the wind had intended doing, and so confident was it of success, that it blew out the candle, despite Marplot's protecting hand, and then attempted to do the same, or as near as it could to the door, if not *out* then back. But here the point was disputed most persistently by the holder of the extinguished candle, who stood

behind and held his own position and the door's too, against the next gust which was even more confident and bolder than the last. However, it was more obliging, in one particular, yet it did not mean to be : it blew Tom in through the small space, allowed by the disputant from behind ; or if it did not blow him in, it accelerated his motions so much, that he speedily got in, and joining the force in the rear at once put the wind to rout, the door on the latch, the bolt in the casement and the key in the lock. The enemy was not at all chagrined at his defeat; he whistled a sort of a "don't care" tune, with a chorus of,

"There's plenty of doors I can easy blow back,
There's plenty of poor I can put on the rack,
There's plenty of rags I can whisk in the air,
There's plenty of forms leave shivering and bare;"

and blew on and away.

Marplot groped a little, and but a little, for the passage-way was so narrow that this action was of necessity quite limited. The door into his apartment was soon found, a match struck, and the candle re-lighted.

Mr. Barley found his way at once to the feeble stove which held the feeble coals, but to him who had faced the cold for hours, and felt chilled from hat to boots, the coals seemed glowing and their warmth not slight. He eyed the skillet without a handle; he held his hands over and in the wreaths of vapor that were curling up from the hot water it held; he unbuttoned his outer covering, a cloak, which was, no doubt, at its first creation intended for the use of a larger, taller, and better built man than Barley, a man of no mean rank in the service of Her Majesty. But it had been divested of all official signs, and those of the unpretending civilian substituted, but the stuff of which it was made, and the outlines of its make-up yet remained, although here and there a seam had been taken in, sometimes straight and sometimes on the slant known to the mantua-maker as "bias;" any way to make it fit so closely, that when grasped by its collar firmly, and shaken warmly, Tom could not slip out of it, and thus escape the swinging in.

How came Tom Barley by such a coat? He had advanced upon it. And the needs attendant upon extravagance and dissipation advanced so rapidly upon the one for whom it was made, that he never "took it up;" but Polly Barley did after it had lain its lawful time for redemption, and she made of it a cloak that she was very proud of, for she said it lent an air to Tom that he never had before.

"A deuced wind, this," said he, throwing back this garment, after the unbuttoning already recorded. "Blows inside a fellow, as well as out." He had not yet turned about to look at what was on and under the table, but he knew the skillet without a handle meant something.

"Yes," replied Marplot, busy fishing some strands of the wick from the cavern of melted tallow into which the wind had forced them; "yes, but it hasn't been long blowing up."

"Blowing up?" returned Tom, facing now the pies, the rolls, the butter, the paper bag, and the spoon. "I blowed it up a good many times coming from Cross Bow down here. But that's the trouble, it wouldn't blow up, it would blow down, around, in, out, under, anywhere but up."

"Suit yourself," said the host, setting the candle and the bottle which held it, just where it could drip on to the pies, in case it missed aim in striking the body of the bottle; "it blows any way you can name it, and I am not sorry either, so long as it has not kept you away."

"How's that, old fellow; anything new up?" Here his eyes wandered from *upon* to *under* the table, and he threw the cloak entirely off, and tossed it and his wide brimmed hat upon the little, low, dingy thing that Marplot called a bed, and drawing a stool as near the table as he could, without sitting directly at it, sat down.

"Never mind now," said Marplot, advancing with another stool, "you're hungry, I knew you would be, so I got what you like; you're thirsty, so I got—" and he pointed to the jug. "Now, eat all you can, and drink just enough to warm you—mind, only that, till I hear all, then you can have jug and cork too."

"If I do—if I do lose myself, just keep me here till

I'm Tom Barley, sober, for I told Polly I might be gone days and weeks. You see I didn't know how it might end—and I can't knock her down, because I can't stand up, so what can I do but let her swing me in. It makes a man feel small if he is drunk. That's why I thought a Mrs. Barley might be better to be on the watch for a fellow than Miss Barley. I don't believe I could happen across another woman who could swing me in, if she wanted to. But I'm hungry, and as you are drawing up, I'll do the same. A pie—that's the very thing; kidney, too—all the better for that."

He opened his mouth once, and began a vigorous movement of the jaws; he opened it again, followed by another movement, and one pie was gone. Next, he aimed, with hand first, and then with jaws for a roll; breaking it open, he looked for something to lubricate it with, and spied the butter, which was still quietly spreading itself upon the tin plate. "Anything to take it up with but a fellow's fingers? They're stiff yet with the cold, but I don't know as 'twould be a bad idea to use 'em after all. That looks as if a little stiffening might stop its running so fast. What's it trying to catch, eh?"

"The rolls maybe," said Marplot, opening the cupboard and taking from it—its last offering to the table—a knife, that had seen better days, and a handle; when the former passed away the latter slipped off and the blade was left to mourn for both.

Tom dropped the broken roll, mechanically took the knife, and looking quizzingly into Marplot's face burst into a loud laugh. "Shake hands," said he. "I congratulate you on getting out of that wet drizzly way you had tumbled into, and talking like folks. That's nearer to wit than I ever knew you could come. You look better, too, old fellow. Now, keep it up, walk straight ahead and don't wipe, and you'll soon be a man—and a man of fortune, too. I've got good news for you."

At this last remark conscience secreted a little, for he pulled out his handkerchief and was about to wipe, when Tom flourished the knife blade crying, "There you are at it again while I'm talking; and if you should get up to walk, I suppose, you'd sidle, wouldn't you?"

Marplot put back the handkerchief and endeavored to stop the secreting by drawing out the jug, pouring some water into the glasses to heat them, and picking up the spoon that had fallen over, tired of seeming any longer to say "Help yourself, help yourself."

He knew Tom must eat well and drink a little or he would be surly and non-communicative enough to hold back the most important, and voluble enough to dwell upon the trivial. So he urged his guest to eat, and he did eat, after the roll, another pie—mutton, this time—then a roll, another pie, and so on till all the butter had run after and with most of the rolls, till the pile of pies had been so lowered that the platter could no longer be pretentious, but was forced to face the truth—that it was a platter without a rim.

If it had not been for the long journey by coach, Tom would have protested against so much food without drink, but being downright hungry he let Marplot have his own way, and his way was to fill him first with the solid, so that the fluid could not so soon take Tom off his legs and out of his senses.

This foundation being laid, he proceeded to accept the invitation of the spoon and help the glass—from which he poured the water, which had served to keep it hot—to the contents of the paper bag; then he held the uncorked jug over the sugar, then the skillet without a handle; then he stirred with the spoon of nameless composition, then drew from his hat, which lay on the bed, a lemon, rolled it, and asked Mr. Barley for the knife.

As that gentleman, after wiping it well upon his boot leg, held it up for inspection, his eye caught a mark upon it, and he started as he read, after many turnings of the blade and sundry applications to the boot leg, "Seebold, Wenham." At first sight he had caught enough letters to lead to this effort at deciphering the rest. "That's odd, very," and he turned it to Marplot, who read it and trembled as he sliced the lemon.

Again the glands began to exert themselves, but again the indomitable will began to do the same thing, and they ceased. "Strange," thought he, "I never tried to

make myself conquer fancy before;" and pleased with his triumph he stirred, handed to Barley, and began the same process with the second glass, the sugar, the spoon, the jug without the cork, and the skillet without a handle. But when he came to apply the knife to the lemon, either one of these or his hand slipped, and he tested the keenness of the blade—the blood trickled down his fingers, the lemon stung the wound, and the knife lay quietly by, contemplating with internal satisfaction the effect of the test. It was more than a slight cut of the flesh, it was a stab at what there was of his heart, and he knew it, for he looked nervously at the wall where he had seen the two, snuffed the candle, and set it up higher in the bottle, so that it might the better dispel the shadows.

"That's a bad sign, and your own glass, too; but don't get to drizzling over it," exclaimed Mr. Barley, as he saw the signs of weakening. "Come, here's to your fortune. The way's clear. I've got much to tell you, and let's at it now before you drip and wipe and I'm drunk and stupid. For that's where it'll end, you know. I kept my promise, didn't take a drop while I was gone; and how long must a fellow be sober after it, I want to know? "No longer than he can get drunk, eh? That's it. Here, tie on that rag quick; here, here, lips are dry—one, two—you haven't made it very strong, but you will after I've told you all. Here, now, drink to fortune and a chance to pay your honest debts, which, by the way, you remember, are not small towards me."

"Oh, no!" said Marplot, "oh, no! you and I are nearly square," and he sucked the injured finger while he looked at Tom triumphantly. "Twenty pounds at a time, I've been paying you; here's your own receipts; you must have been taking something before you got here."

"You're a deuced fool, Dan Marplot; you can't come your games on me. I agreed not to ask you for a year, unless you got your money, and then I was to be paid principal and a big lay on for the loan. Twenty pounds at a time! When, where?"

As Tom Barley said this he threw back his head and

doubled up his fists, as if for a settlement at once in a manner which could bring pecuniary benefit to neither party.

"Wait, Tom, don't strike," cried Marplot, in a whining way, for he was in bodily fear of Mr. Barley, although himself a much taller, and every way more muscular man. "See here," and he spread before him receipt after receipt duly dated, written, and signed 'Thomas Barley,' which that amazed gentleman knew were not in his handwriting, and yet he could not tell why they were not, so nicely had they been executed.

"Who gave you these lies?" he cried again, assuming a pugilistic attitude.

"Ralph," said Marplot, who took the true condition in at once, and was sharp enough to fill Tom's glass, "I sent the money by him."

"And that's what's kept him alive. I wondered, yes, I'll—" and pale with rage Mr. Barley lifted the glass which had received a copious supply from the jug, drained it, and, as Marplot filled again, the wind from its boisterous hilarity changed into a low mournful soughing, and therefore a tap three times given under the window could be heard within and not be confused with the flapping signs and shaking windows without.

"Hark!" said Marplot, on the alert for the third at table, "I thought he might come," and lest there might be trouble upon the meeting of the two guests, he picked up the bottle that held the dripping candle and hurried out, thinking to remain long enough to give the last glass time to confound Tom's sense of right and wrong, for he had often seen him gauged, and knew the third glass usually tripped him. But the news he had brought, what of that? Well, he would waken by and by, and talk, so perhaps it was as well.

He had the door open by this time, the last tap of the signal having been given, and he found without Ralph Speeder.

The wind did not humbly acknowledge itself defeated, it passed haughtily and scornfully by, as if vexed with itself for ever attempting to tarry at the Resort.

"Come to say Trout off for—" and Ralph drew Mar-

plot into the passage and away from the door leading into his room. 'Thank you, can't come in, see receipts —all right. Fellow must live—Tom'll forget it.—Now Trout off for somewhere, you know."

"Wenham?" suggested Marplot, eagerly and tremblingly.

"Mebbe; didn't see tickets. Just dropped in to tell you," and he moved toward the outer door, which he opened and was upon the other side, when, bethinking himself of the possibility that he might again hear something of interest to Marplot—and yet it was a time of night when such was not to be expected—jerked his head in saying, "Call again, let you know more," and with as vicious a leer as ever spread over a face jerked his head out and was gone.

Marplot stood still with the bottle so inclined that the tallow drips fell down on his breeches and boots. Nothing yet had happened, and what a relief. Trout had gone; would claim it; and if he—he started and looked at the wall opposite, but there was nothing, though he thought a shadow passed over it.

"Fancy again," he muttered to himself. "Curse fancy!" And he turned back into the room, but just as he did so the outer door again opened and Ralph Speeder's head appeared.

"More news," said that worthy young man, "Mrs. Trout gone too."

"Mrs. Trout!" exclaimed Marplot—the glands began vigorously to work, and the bottle was in danger of precipitation to the ground.

"Yes," laughed Ralph; "didn't you give her away, eh? Too bad—parent, you know, parent—eh?"

At this thrust Marplot looked wildly at him and clutched for the handkerchief.

"Come again," said the visitor and shut the door.

Bewildered at first the man was, but upon slight reflection it came to him that Ralph had been all his life given to playing such pranks, more often making his hits by guess than from knowledge, so he took heart again, and was thinking how long the journey to Wenham and back—how much time the claiming and proving—would

necessitate, when the door again came ajar and was soon swung widely back, while a voice said, "Margaret's Mrs. Trout."

At this lingering without and thrusting within, Marplot grew angry, and stepping to the threshold seized Ralph by the sleeve and pulled him, not gently, in. "See here, what do you mean? Say all you've got to say."

Ralph still held the leer, and the pulling in did not in the least abash him, but rather added to his boldness as he turned and whispered, "*She's* peached on you. Leg it. They're after you. I can hear it." As he said the last he put his wrists together, and with his tongue on the roof his mouth made a sharp noise very much like the clinking of a pair of iron bracelets.

Marplot turned livid, and shook in every joint. "She ain't in London," at last he whined.

"Ain't she?" cried Speeder. "Mebbe she ain't? You'll hear story—good. Ha, ha, ha! Leg it. Off—off now. Sorry for you, but must laugh."

"Wait, wait;" and Marplot, still grasping the candle, opened the door and hurried into the room, for he heard footsteps in the distance without. He heeded not Tom —who was happy and social, or would be—and tore up a plank of the flooring, and thrust his long arm down, but found nothing, and holding the bottle near, he looked down, but saw nothing. With horror, he turned to Ralph in the doorway, and hoarsely whispered, "It ain't there. I'm robbed—robbed. What shall I do? It must be here."

He was about to thrust head, arm, and bottle down together, when Ralph said, in a tone of insolent triumph, "Can't find it—no use. Took it. Found you out—thought somebody else might get it. Keep it safe—bail you—ha, ha, ha! Here they come."

Marplot heard them, threw the candle where it would light the bed, ran through the long passage to the rear, out the door, up by the wall, across some low buildings till another street was beneath him, leaped down, sped away, still shambling through the poorest, most distressed by-ways, till he came to the river. Here, exhausted, he

paused, and crouching down in the shadow of an empty cask, he listened. No one — nothing — within hearing. Why had he fled to the water? Why? and shuddering at the question, he arose and was about to skulk away in the shadows of the long low houses that at intervals skirt the river in every commercial town, but he was drawn rapidly back till he came to the water's edge. There he stood with strained eyes and heaving bosom, with clenched hands, and brow dripping with the working of conscience, till the drippings were so large, so heavy, that they fell into the river, and at every fall he made as if he would follow them. But the cord that had drawn him there, let him so far over the brink, and no farther; it drew him back just as he thought to dry the fountains of conscience forever by a plunge.

He saw the waters roll themselves together again, and *two* banks, now slowly, slowly, come towards him, with each onward motion becoming more and more human in form. Again the cord loosened, and he made as if he would leap, but it held him. He tried to put up his hands to shut out the sight, but they were powerless. He heard footsteps, and knew by their hurry that he was tracked, but he cared not—the banks drew nearer, nearer, the cord loosened and tightened, the pursuers would soon be upon him, and he would welcome them, for they would tear him from the spot his feet were sealed to. On, they would break the sight his eyes were fixed upon; and on they came; but the banks had reached his feet, the cord had let him almost to them, and as he leaned over, struggling with the desperation of a madman, they arose, and stretched out their arms as if they would envelop him. The cord drew him back enough to escape their embrace, and raising his right hand he stretched it towards them imploringly; his horrified gaze was frozen; he tried to make a sound, a cry for mercy from them; there came only a gurgling, choking from the throat, and when the law's hand was laid roughly on his shoulder, the cord snapped—he fell forward into the water—dead.

CHAPTER XLV.

JOE COMPLETES THE BUSINESS, SO FAME AND FORTUNE MUST FOLLOW.

THE heavy gate grumbled somewhat at the hand that had disturbed its long rest, and rustily, crustily it closed and was locked from within, much wondering to itself what should bring a solitary man and a curious dog within the domains it guarded, and if they must come,—why did they not leap the boundaries with a joyous ha, ha! and derisive grimace, like the goblins who feasted nightly in the banqueting room of the castle?

The new comers were of a much too serious, matter-of-fact air to suit the gate, for their entrance boded a breaking up of the peace and indolence it had so long enjoyed. By its creaking it had warned all within hearing of the intrusion, and at the first step a shower of dead and frost-bitten leaves fell upon Joe and Rover, as if to unveil the sight of the old branches and let them look once more upon a human face. The master turned his eyes upward—they swayed a welcome; the dog barked and tossed the leaves about him—with nose on the ground he ran ahead; where he could not walk he leaped. But Joe was not so expeditious in his journey; he made his way as best he could, with the aid of a heavy walking stick, to the nearest ruins, which he recognized as those of the old lodge spoken of by Lawyer Thump.

It had been made of less enduring substance than the other buildings, so when the ivy and the creepers held it, summer and winter, in their damp and clinging embrace, each season growing denser and giving it less light, less warmth, it grew rotten without, musty within, and fell timber by timber. Stones sank as mortar crumbled, till it lay a shapeless mass.

A large flat stone, which may have served as a step to a doorway, offered Joe a soft and pleasant seat, for it was covered thickly with bright green moss. Resting here he drew forth the iron box from a sack strapped across his shoulders, and stretched out the map of the grounds. A main avenue ran from the lodge to the castle, and to locate it could be done only by noting the statues and fountains it led by, and the undulations it crossed. Thus he knew where it must be; where it really was could not be seen for rank weeds which had thriven upon the coarse soil it had been made of. They had sprung up years and years before when the gardener had ceased to mow the lawn upon either side and keep it clean and stony; they had mouldered autumn after autumn till they had made a rich soil from which sprang wild flowers and tall grasses, so in naught differed it from the rest. A tiled walk followed it, but Joe sought not this, yet here and there he could see a stone had pushed itself up to the sun and air, either by the upheaval of the frozen ground under some long ago spring sun, or by the washing away of its bed by some searching autumn rain.

The grasses were matted; the flower stalks had laid down for winter's rest, and were twined about each other; the ground vines were tangled and made loops for the feet to catch in, as if they would hold back any who would pass over them. But Joe plodded on with Rover still ahead. Occasionally a tall fallen tree broke the monotony of the wild waste, and he stepped along its trunk, sinking into softening wood, or picking safely his way from branch to branch.

Statues were grimed with dust, in which moss found sustenance; winds had severed their limbs or rudely snatched from them whatever hands had held or heads borne; fountains were choked; lakes were dried. As he made his way through a clump of trees in verdure and foliage much like the hardy fir of the northern clime, the wind struck him full in the face with a cloud of dust with which it was hurrying away to add somewhere to the desolation. When it had passed he rubbed as much of its burden as it had been pleased to spare, out of his eyes,

but did not so quickly shut its mournful sound out of his ears, and saw before him what had once been a gentle slope from the castle. This he rapidly covered, for the growth over it was less toilsome to step upon, and he soon stood before broad stairsteps leading to Ivandale's entrance. The couchant lions that guarded them were iron, the storms could not break or move — only rust them. Rover barked at them, but they were not aggressive; he sniffed about them, but they were passive. The winds, always busy, had kept the staircase clean, and it, having been of massive make and foundation, was still firm.

Joe ascended, and sat for rest at the base of a pillar which, with its mate, supported an archway before the door. He opened the bag of provisions, refreshed himself and Rover, folded and laid in its place in the box the map of Ivandale's exterior, and laid upon the broad marble floor that of its interior. After its examination he selected a key from the many he had and applied it to the iron door heavily studded with rivets and thickly coated with rust; it fitted but would not turn; another and another, but none so near the right one.

Rover, strengthened by the contents of the bag, began a tour of independent inspection; he dashed down the stairway, bounded off the side and over a lion, ran around a tower which projected from the right and shut off the sight of one side of the building—that is, the sight to one approaching the main entrance—he suddenly put his nose to the ground, and followed whatever he scented till it led him to a sort of *porte cochère* which protected a door similar in make, but not so great in size as the one into whose lock Joe had fitted the key. Leaping back with a joyous bark, he pulled and tugged at his master's coat till he strapped his bag, gathered together the keys and followed him. Could it be that the dog traced the last footstep that had led there? He sniffed again, but more rapidly, and Joe soon placed the same key in lock and stepped within the castle walls.

The air was suffocating, its deadness unendurable. He threw wide open the double doors; the wind, always inquisitive, rushed in, while he sat down upon a heavy

oaken chair that was just within, again to consult the way from this new entrance. When sure of his route, and quite satisfied with the work the wind had been doing, he filliped to Rover, who was without, and they crossed a fancifully tiled passage and opened a door at its side. Here again Joe paused for the wind to precede him, and when he could breathe within, he groped his way to the nearest window, then opened the sash and let in light. The drapery from this casement had fallen, rent by time, and lay in tender folds under his feet. The walls were hung in crimson, fringed with the dainty web of the spider and adorned with the fantastic open work of the house moth; the carpet was rich in color still, soft and sinking beneath the tread; the chairs were ebony in frame, massive in make, graceful in form; the upholsterer's work was faded and dropping; ornaments costly and elegant lent their beauty; but Joe heeded them not, nor heeded the use to which the apartment had been put, which was, doubtless, that of a drawing-room. He pushed on to the farther end of it and opened a door, from which came stifling, musty odors, and he was forced to await again the wind's pleasure some moments before he could enter the very banqueting hall where so many times he of the padded chair had presided.

The board was spread — its linen was yellow and tattered, its food had hardened, and in doing this, had filled the room with heaviness which could not escape; glasses of clear cut and delicate tracery of the Radnor crest, stood in disorder—chairs, just as the last guests had quitted them, bottles were upon their sides and upright, corked and uncorked. One of the latter, Joe put in his bag, after he had let in light and air from the windows. Behind the padded chair he stepped, tapped upon the wall several times, when a panel from ceiling to floor flew to the side.

He lighted a taper, and, followed by Rover, entered. The passage led underground, after descending a few steps, and took him to a small room, plainly furnished with table, chair, some comforts for smoking, reading and writing. The table—or desk it might be called—he sounded—struck upon it as he had the panel, only more

softly—and a drawer sprang to view, whose papers he examined and bore away. Re-locking and re-closing, he found his way again to the ruined lodge, where he rested, drank sparingly from the bottle, and before nightfall was far from Ivandale.

CHAPTER XLVI.

"TIME'S UP!"

"TIME'S up, time's up," said dearie very softly, very sorrowfully, just as the sun was sending his first beams into the little room in Blue Bottle Court upon the morning after the demands of justice, not the law, had been fulfilled. The sun looked in cheerfully, and played merrily over the cot as if glad once more to be up before the Little Man; but his face was so pale, his eyelids half-closed, his eyes so sunken that it sorrowed, drew in its bright rays, covered its face with a cloud, and tears fell without. But the people only said, "It rains."

This was done while the starling was still perching on the open door of her cage, not pluming herself, for she had no care for appearance; she had lost taste for the hempen, the cake-crumbs Great Heart had dropped to her were stale, the fig she had covered with sand always kept fresh in her wire house. She sat long, and waited for a word, a look, from her master, heard the drops upon the window panes, and at last ventured, still more sadly, "Time's up, time's up," shook her head and was turning back to her perch, when the form that had been still, the eyes that had not seen for so many hours, moved, opened, the lips murmured something. Great Heart bent gently over to listen, and she flew down and alighted above his head.

"Yes, almost up," he whispered, "but the gatherings are so beautiful, the sack so large, the road so green;" and then tired, so tired, he could only lift his finger upward, and smile.

Tears started to the eyes of Great Heart. Isaac was dear to him, and just upon the verge of success they must separate. Softly his left arm crept around the Little Man's neck; a little the head was raised, and with his right hand he gave him, drop at a time, some gentle stimulant prescribed for him when he should awaken. The exertion, slight as it was, exhausted him, and he rested; but his eyes were open, and he looked gratefully upon the man who had not left him since he had been stricken, and well he knew he would be with him—even to the brink.

After a time he said, "The clouds are not so heavy; no, the old life comes back to me, and with it, the clearness up here," and he laid his hand upon his forehead, touched the sacks of ice, and asked, with a bewildered look, "What are they?"

Great Heart told him in as few words as he could.

"Yes, yes," murmured he, "I see how it was. 'Excitement of any kind.' I knew it would bring a drawing up. I knew it must come, but oh! to come that way, to dream I saw *her* face at the window, and never reach it when I put out my hand. That face that I have hunted so long to find, to just touch as I used to in the old life, to make it smile, to make it happy, to say to it, 'I forgive you.' I will go to it, I am strong now." And he drew up his shrunken, shrivelled legs with unnatural strength, as if he would step out. "Ha, ha! these are not mine, are they," he laughed wildly, looking down at them, "are they—tell me, are they?"

"Yes," said Mr. Wallace sadly, "they are yours, Isaac."

"They must be gatherings," returned the Little Man; "they must be. Where are mine, Great Heart, where are mine?"

"This is all that is left of them, stout and muscular as they once were," Great Heart made answer.

"But how came it, tell me, I am aweary and cannot walk on them now, so I will listen to how they got this way. I thought I was clearing, but it may be not, or if I do it won't stay clear;" and Isaac lay back, put his hands upon the ice sacks and pressed them closely, as if they relieved his throbbing brain.

"You were very, very sick, good Isaac, long, long ago—a fever followed congestion," came from Mr. Wallace with some reluctance lest the subjects he must necessarily touch upon would excite the Little Man too much. "The disease left you with these," and he drew the covers over the limbs which were much wasted from hip to ankle.

"Where was I, Great Heart?"

"In London."

"With you, I know, for I could always remember that, but how did I get to London, how did I ever find my way into the Great Chimney with its dreadful foulness? I don't remember leaving the pretty green fields. Do I? No, I do not. Let me see. Yes, I do; there comes another clearing up here and I can remember; but it won't last long. I came to find *her*. They sold my home, Great Heart, didn't they? My lands, my shops, they slipped from the old life, the happy life—and—and—I can't remember—what then? Tell me."

"You came to London, to look for *her* and seek justice for *him*, if—"

"If *she* was gone," interrupted Isaac. "Ha, ha! yes—I think it clears again. I said if *she* was—" his voice sunk to a soft whisper—"dead. But I couldn't find that out, could I?"

"No," returned Mr. Wallace sadly, "you could not. But you are getting tired, good Isaac; rest now and hear about it some other time."

"No, I cannot, I must hear it now, and then I can sleep, maybe. Tell me, Great Heart, tell me. I can listen," and the Little Man closed his eyes.

"You came here," said Mr. Wallace, taking his hand tenderly, "and saw *him* upon the street. The shock was so great that you fell senseless; a crowd gathered. I was passing in a carriage, I stopped, recognized Isaac Harold, Wenham, had you lifted into it and taken to my home, which I had here in London. When you were able I heard your story and resolved to help you. Your ambition to be on the scent of your enemy was too great for your strength, and you fell in a relapse, which kept you bedridden for months."

"I remember that," said Harold; "and you nursed me day and night. What a world of trouble I might have hurried out of then! What did I stay for? It isn't so clear as it was a bit ago — I can't tell what I staid for."

"To gather for me," replied Great Heart. "If it had not been for you I should never be on the track that I am, never."

"Yes, I did gather, I remember that. The state paper, the cloak—but where did I find them?"

"You had been to Harding House, Isaac, to see some old friends, and came home along the river, and I never knew Mary Ray's trouble till then — till you found them—the cloak, the paper. From that time you began the busy life of a gatherer, to find if you could trace of *her*, and I from that time helped you. We followed *him* from town to village, from country to country—Rover and I—and you watched for *him* in the Great Chimney."

"And when it snorted and puffed and could not hold its foulness, then I knew he was in it and more wrongs would come to light," broke in Isaac with some of the old sparkle in his eyes while his hand caught nervously at that of Great Heart.

The latter went on: "Before the time drew near for claiming I lost track of *him*, for you know I followed *her* to London and found she became a lady's maid."

"Yes, ha! yes; it get's all clear again. That is why I dealt with the maids for their mistresses' cast-offs. Yes, yes, I see it so plain—if I could only hold it and think, but it goes so quick, It is like her face—I put my hand out and I cannot touch it. Tell me the rest."

"I knew *he* would be here soon, and we waited and watched. I went to a village some miles from here and secured Joe, 'honest Joe'—I had heard of him in my searches about the country. Almost every inn for miles about knows me, good Isaac, for I followed every child that I could learn of who had been adopted or found upon the streets. I scoured the country upon foot when it served my purpose best, with liveried groom if that

gained my ends. This I did before *he* began to travel; and when satisfied I could not find the child of Mary Ray I took up *his* trail." Mr. Wallace spoke with emotion that he tried in vain to master. "I said that I lost trace of *him*—yes, for some time; but, Isaac, who found it? You, you. You gave me the gathering that said upon it 'Ralph Speeder,' who was a companion of *his*. I knew it, but I did not tell you so. I handled it and a thread sprang from it, a subtle thread that always unwinds when I need it. It took me to him soon, one dark night when Rover and I were going from here to Jericho—it took me to Ralph Speeder, and I followed him to Poorly's Resort, where *he* lives. Now, see how much you have done for me, and I so little for you."

"But, Great Heart," whispered Isaac, "you can do for me. Lean close to me. Let me tell you softly. Take me to Wenham, where I can smell the mould, the fresh mould, the clean earth. Take me there, and when you find *her* let *her* sleep next to me. Promise me, Great Heart; let that be your gathering for me."

"It shall be done, and anything else you ask for," returned Mr. Wallace with trembling lip.

"It is clearing fast now. Thank you, thank you. Tell me all. I am aweary, but I must hear. *They* say, 'Listen, we will give you strength.' The child—did we ever find her? That is not so clear now."

"Yes, we have found her. *His* last victim, you know, was Maria Ray, a child of Major Ray's brother, born about the time of the marriage of Richard and Mary. The blind man and Miss Thump—"

"Yes, yes, I see it now. The handkerchief she took to put over her face was one that Mary Ray owned—the blind man saw—some blind men can see." As the Little Man said this he smiled faintly, rested, and then added, "Yes, you whispered it to me one night, and I said I would watch her, keep harm away when she was abroad. I did. Yes, I did."

"Yes, good Isaac, you have always been faithful. I have little more to tell. The way is plain now. Mr. Hamper found a paper about her that, put with ours, makes her identity beyond a doubt."

"See, see, Great Heart," cried Isaac almost sitting upon his cot, "how pleasant it is. Do you see it?" and he stretched out his finger—"the road before me, the sack that is ready, the gatherings that are so beautiful and so easy to bear."

"I'm in a hurry," came softly from dearie before Mr. Wallace could respond.

"So am I, dearie, so am I, to be over there."

Just then came a tap upon the outer door, low though it was, the quick ear of Isaac heard, and he said, "Joe?"

Mr. Wallace stepped out, opened to the sun—for he was shining again—and the green-grocer with some wine jelly, the outlay for which had cost him the profits of a week, but he minded it not for his heart dictated the giving. While asking in whispered tones for the patient, a basket was set upon the step and the bearer of it stood aside till the grocer took leave with a sorrowful countenance; then Mr. Hamper stepped forward, saluted Mr. Wallace, and was quickly followed in this by Meg.

They had brought a few dainties for the sick man if he could take them, while in the bottom of the basket lay some clean linen for the bed, and some napkins, towels, and such little things that are needed by the score in a sick-room, and which Mother Martha said, "Men never had plenty of."

Learning that he had returned to consciousness, Peleg said he would "shove off," lest the excitement might be too great, but Meg asked if she might not sit by him, and she entered the room.

Isaac knew her and smiled. She laid upon his pillow a bunch of geranium and heliotrope and one rose-bud that she cut from the bush blooming in the living room at Wreckers, and took the vacant chair by his side. The presence of the girl, the perfume of the flowers, or the little wine jelly Great Heart gave him brought strength and some of the old vivacity. For a time she kept watch by him. The oiled-skin sacks she re-filled with ice, the pillow she smoothed, the covers she straightened, the lips she moistened, the face and hands she bathed. She felt it a pleasure to do all this, and yet she had seen him but once before—on the morning when she found

the wind had much the advantage of him. And how did she and Mr. Hamper know that he was sick?

Let us look in upon the little drama enacted the day before upon the third flight, "last house at the end," and from the close of that drama, follow Mr. Thump.

The mother of Margaret Ray, as said, asked for the husband of that young lady. She summoned him from the fly near by. He came in all blandness and suavity till he saw Mr. Thump; then the smile was more meaningless, and the hands rubbed themselves together nervously.

"Glad to meet you, madam," said he, advancing to the bedside, "glad indeed." He extended his soft white hand, but none met his—perhaps she did not see it.

"I have no strength nor time to waste," she began at once; and they propped her into an easier sitting position with pillows at the back and sides. "I am feeble, but I will speak the truth, and it will be done with almost my dying breath. I have promised *them; they* would not leave me till I did. Oh, what I have suffered since I said I was the wife of Richard Ray. You called it the delirium of fever; it was not, it was a struggle between good and bad, angels and devils. I shall never suffer more beyond; I have passed through all the hell that can ever be found, the sifting and weighing of life's acts, and the crushing, oh, the terrible crushing burden of them if they are bad. To see *them;* O God! have mercy and I will speak," and she clasped her hands in despair as she looked up beseechingly to whatever she saw. "*They* linger about, *they* distrust me, and well *they* may. If they will not plunge in, clutch at the water, and sink and rise, sink and rise, I can bear it; but that, oh! that is terrible. Save me from that again! save me!" and she listened breathlessly. "They will," she continued with her head inclined, as if she had heard an answer to her prayer. "Let me hurry on, and they will come back only to bless me, it may be, for telling the truth. Now," she turned to the magistrate, "I believe I cannot live long, and I swear to what I shall say." The right hand was lifted and the Book was kissed.

"In Wenham, there lived twenty years ago, a girl

light of heart, fair of face and happy in home; father and mother were dead; but one cared for her, who thought no sacrifice for her happiness aught. The house was just without the town, and was always open in hospitality. Oh! that it had once closed its doors and barred its windows—for there entered one not attractive in feature nor good in heart, yet over the girl he held a strange fascination. She was beautiful, and he thought she might take him where he could not, by himself, find place. The charm grew stronger, the brother strove to break it, and turned the bolt upon him, but the sister defied him in this, and in revenge he was one night robbed, while the pair fled. The brother, next to William Seebold, was the most prosperous proprietor of Wenham's many industries, but the blow struck to his heart, and, she heard long after, to his mind, for his sister had been his idol. The money taken was not so great in amount, but notes were forged upon him; he might have contested them, but he found those who had wives and children would suffer, and he was alone in the world, so he met them; and his house, lands, and factories were struck by the sheriff's hammer. The sister heard of it and laughed. Awhile after this, Mary Seebold and Richard Ray were married. You know who they were?" she said turning to Mr. Thump, "for you are seeking their daughter."

He bowed assent.

She continued, "The man would be heir to Major Ray's estate, if Richard had not stood in the way, and I am not unjust when I say that he often in youth planned in his own mind how he might make the path clear. But Richard married, and then the fear of heirs arose, and one was born in time, little Margaret. The mother, was happy; the father cared for naught but home, wife and babe. The grandfather was childish in his delight, but the same shadow fell across their threshold, the same blighting hand had entered. The wife was made to believe, by letters, and a false marriage contract, that Richard Ray had been married previously, and that a child, a girl, then older than little Margaret, was his. The mother's reason gave way; she escaped with her baby to London; she found the man who had made her

his victim ; he took all the money she had, which was not inconsiderable, and then turned her, a maniac, on the streets.

"The once happy girl in Wenham followed her secretly, and would have saved her, but she was fleeter of foot, and disappeared near the water. But the other waited, watched, and still hoped, when—oh ! she leaped in, sent forth a wild laugh and sunk, arose, and cried with outstretched arms for her baby, sunk—and—and," the woman fell forward, and buried her head in the clothes, with her fingers tightly closed over her ears, as if to shut out the sound, and shuddered with horror.

When the paroxysm had passed, she resumed, "And I—for it was I—never looked for the child, but turned back, and to drown the plunge, the cry, became more wicked—lent ear, hand, and brain to covering all traces of the marriage of Mary Seebold, and with the man, set fire to Wenham's pretty church. But ha ! I saved the records—there they are—but I did not do it for good ; no, no ; I had a hope, a devilish hope, that my own child might heir the riches. I took her to America ; I sent money for her care, when I could get it. He—the man — and I travelled, hunted up heirs for estates, cheated them if we could, and charged heavy interest if we could not. We traced Ivandale's heirs — all were gone. I came back to London, where I left him. He had grown timid in purpose, disgusting in person, miserly in disposition. I took a menial's position in a noble family—that of lady's maid—and for a while, I could rest in the dark, and not see the awful pictures that would rise from its depths. But when he came back from long travels, I did not know where, he persuaded me to go to America and get our child. She had been summoned by his attorney, but I watched her safely to London. Then—oh ! how can I tell it ? But I must, or they will plunge into the water again, and I cannot bear it. Then I found he had enticed the last victim—Maria Ray—and her I would have saved, but I could not. I got to the brink as she jumped, too. He gave her something that fired her brain, and she followed Mary Seebold.

"Again I fled from him. But something brought me

back to London, sick, penniless, haunted night and day, stiffened with fear at sight of my own shadow. I sent for my child, Margaret, resolved to tell her all, but she was so beautiful, so heartless, that it brought back the demon again, and I said I was the wife of Richard Ray. But I was not—and above all, I found she had married the counsellor of the man I hate and yet must call husband. So I showed the records and said I had the contract—and so I have, but it is not a true one. I looked at her and thought her husband could, with his cunning ways, make her mistress of Ivandale, and for her ease and comfort I said what was false. But that night *they* filled the room, the water flowed thick and slimy, it caught me, but I could not sink; I was drowning, but could not die, and *they*—all those I had helped to wrong—but one—stood on the bank and looked pitilessly at me. Night after night they came; still I said, Margaret—for I called my child by that name—should have my aid to the fortune, and I held out against them. But last night I climbed to the shore, and when the good woman who nursed me was sleeping, worn out with watching, I ran out of the house, down the court, and thought in despair to find the real river; but I saw a light, stole softly to the window, and looked—looked upon—my brother—a wreck of himself. His face had long haunted me, but it was not the face I saw, and I would not have known it, had I not seen one beside it I did know—that of Sir James Lambert, who has worked for years to find out the heiress that Mary Ray left on the shore—and my brother has helped him and sought me. I did think my child might be touched by my story and care for him, but I saw she would not. Since I saw my brother last night, the resolve has been firm to tell all. I am the wife of Daniel Marplot, and you," she pointed to Margaret, "are our child. Isaac Harold is my brother—whose happy, prosperous life I wrecked. They are going, the water is receding, and I shall step over—but the shore is barren, desolate. Yet they tell me I can make it blooming somewhere in eternity Let me sign. I am weak."

She seized the pen and wrote, "Helen Harold";—

then stopped, shuddered, and looking up at the magistrate asked, "Must I write his name?" He bowed; and she added, "Marplot."

Ralph Speeder had heard it all; and this was why he said, "She's peached," and why he also said, that Mr. and Mrs. Trout had gone, for they did go. Settlement with Mrs. Mutter was speedy, that worthy declaring to the lodgers that she always knew there was something wrong somewhere. Trunks were filled and the first outgoing train that they could board, did not take them to Wenham, but to some town where they rested and devised for the future. Not many weeks after they were found in America, where Mrs. Trout was quite at home, and where, for years, she aided her husband with her skill and art in making sufficient for a genteel appearance, at least.

Mr. Thump called at Isaac's door. Mr. Wallace answered the summons hurriedly, told him of the attack and the danger. Mr. Thump intimated that the woman had made disclosures which would arrest Marplot, and that he would like to communicate with Mr. Hansom. "Which gentleman," said the lawyer, looking him full in the eyes, "I believe I address in the person of Mr. Wallace."

The latter replied with a faint smile, "You have discovered me. I am John Hansom. Do your best and at once with Marplot. I will call and hear the story as soon as I can. The doctors are in consultation. Can good Miss Thump call upon us?"

Mr. Thump assured him that she could, and that lady did call as soon as she could leave the woman who was sinking rapidly, and as she told Miss Hamper of Isaac's illness, we see now why Peleg and Meg called next morning.

After Great Heart had finished the savory breakfast of Mother Martha, he came to the bedside of Isaac, noted the change in all things about him and the happy contented look upon his face. Dearie was more cheerful, and had perched near enough to take some crumbs from Meg's fingers. "Good Isaac," said he, "I must leave you for a short time, if you are willing, in the hands

of Miss Meg, whose dainty work I already see has brought light to your eyes. Miss Thump will soon be here again; the doctor will be here by eleven, and I shall return before then."

"Go, Great Heart, go," replied Harold audibly; "I am glad you can get relief. You must be aweary; but I think the gatherings must be good or you would have the old worn look."

"They are promising, and I want you to live and enjoy them, good Isaac," returned Mr. Wallace.

"Great Heart," said he in clear tones, "that cannot be, *they* tell me so."

Mr. Wallace pressed the Little Man's hand, and turned away with some direction to Meg concerning the medicine. He drew on a coat of peculiar texture and pattern, took the ebony cane in one hand and at his side held a black hat which he did not put on till he was without—it was soft and held at one side by a jewelled star. His air was one natural to him, slightly haughty, his bearing proud and his look stern.

As he hurried down Mayfair something hurried the same way and gained upon him rapidly, it barked and leaped, it wagged and lapped, it almost threw him off his feet when it first struck him. "Good Rover, good fellow," he cried with delight, and held the dog in his arms.

Joe came quickly up with staff and sack, and was greeted with joy. He told in a few words of his success, and heard with sorrow of Isaac's illness; and assuring Rover's master that they had both breakfasted heartily, they made all haste to the office of Mr. Thump, in Lunley Lane, where that gentleman gave Joe and Rover a most hearty welcome, and then turning to him who was last to enter the door said, "I addressed Mr. Hansom in the person of Mr. Wallace but yesterday; I now find them both in Sir James Lambert."

"Quite right, Mr. Thump," returned the latter with somewhat of the peculiar manner of Mr. Hansom. "It served a necessity to seem what I was not, and I accepted the issue; but there is some haste to be made, for I must return to Blue Bottle Court before eleven. Let me hear her story, let Joe hear it too."

They listened, Sir James oft with head bowed and frame convulsed with emotion. Then followed the recital of the attempted arrest of Marplot and his tragic end. At this his face became rigid, and the stern, relentless look made deep shadows on his brow.

The papers Joe had brought were next examined. They consisted of the will of Major Ray, giving all to the child of Mary Seebold, if living, to be held in trust by Sir James Lambert; the history of Lord Radnor's children, penned by himself, with the death of each and the posterity thereof appended as it occurred, or as he had ascertained when on his journeys and noted upon his returns; then came the one most desired—the one relating to his acquaintance with Major Ray. This was a sort of memoranda, interlarded with curses expressed and blanked when referring to the visit of that military gentleman to the castle, but, after intercourse came, the language grew milder, till at the last it was even, at times, affectionate; it spoke of the good-will with which he had been received at Rayless House, and the light the old major had thrown into his life—late as it was—so the juttings may have lost some sharp angles, and the deeply sunken been raised slightly. Let us hope so.

The child of Mary, and the grandchild of William Seebold, was minutely described as she last looked to the major; the dimple upon her left cheek was especially noted as a mark peculiar to the Ray family, and one by which she might some day be known. A will bequeathed all to her if ever found. In his wanderings he had searched far and wide, but no trace was discoverable. Papers of importance, it might be some day, belonging to the family, were deposited in the care of the city of London. As we have seen these were they which Mr. Trout had examined.

The writer begged forgiveness of all hearts he had pained and all the lives he had blighted. Mr. Thump listened while Sir James read, and in turn perused himself. When the last was folded he passed his hand over his brow, thoughtfully, sorrowfully.

"Joe," said he, who had engaged him long before to serve him, "the fame of the finding be yours, and the

fortune also." With that he put in his hand a check whose amount honest Joe read and re-read before he could believe it was his. "When I engaged you I could not tell what I should ask you to do; you waited long to be called to action, but have responded well."

Sir James consulted his watch, he would barely have time to reach Isaac before eleven. As he buttoned his surtout Mr. Thump saw the same crest that had been wrought upon the velvet collar of Mr. Hansom's cloak—the lion's claw and the eagle's beak.

Joe prepared to leave also, and Rover—it was decided that he should go with him too, until there was a change in the little home at Blue Bottle Court.

"Sir James," said the lawyer, "when you are at liberty I will take you to one who, I think, is the true Margaret Ray."

"In the meantime," suggested Sir James, without betraying the least emotion or surprise, "you might call upon her and prepare the way for her good fortune. Good morning, sir, I must hasten," and his gray eyes had a soft happy look for the moment as he left Mr. Thump, who was not at all puzzled what course to take.

Mother Martha dropped in to see Isaac while Sir James was away. Meg remained till the latter returned. Not caring to meet the doctor, and knowing that uncle must have something good for dinner, she took leave, promising to call again before night.

The air was cool enough to bring out the roses upon her cheeks and make her step brisk and healthful. Some of her charity charges detained her on the way and she was somewhat belated. Hastening on, her hand was soon upon the latch of the Hamper dwelling, but it lingered for a moment—a voice within she knew, her heart beat quickly and the roses were not confined to her cheeks—a little calmer, and she entered.

"Meg, child, ye be welcome," said Mr. Hamper, "an' I be wantin' to look arter Snatcher's moorin's. They might shift with the tide. Samooel 'll sail with ye a bit;" and he hurried out of the house, out of the court to some hiding on the quay where the loose fitting

sleeve of the great coat was drawn many times across the bronzed cheeks.

"Samuel," said Meg, after charging uncle to be back directly to dinner, "I'm glad to see you." She gave him her hand; he took it and led her to a seat near the one from which he had just arisen.

"Meg, you have refused me the assurance so long as your name and birth were unknown. I come this morning to bring you knowledge of both. You are heiress of Ivandale, a descendant of the Radnor family, a grandchild of Major Ray, and inherit his estates in Wenham. I had but Mr. Hamper's story to settle the point, and that he has just given me."

She did not seem surprised. After thinking a moment she laughed merrily and said, "Why, Samuel, I was your client all the time, and you never knew it."

"Never till this morning."

"You must be rewarded. Let me see—I shall be eighteen next month. Then we will go to Wenham and look after *our* estates."

"But," said Mr. Thump, "do you—"

"Now, now; I know just what you are going to say. I told you once who had my heart, and all the gold and silver in the world cannot take it from him so long as he—" the rest was lost in the depths of Samuel's coat.

When Peleg came back he looked sad, the time was so near for the giving up of Meg. "She war a leddy born," he kept repeating to himself, "an' she will be a leddy bred."

"Uncle," she cried, as he came into the room, "I am so glad, for I can do so much for you now. No more pulling up and down stream when you are tired. Rest, now, uncle, so long as you live, and Meg can make it for you; just think of that."

"An' ye be the same old Meg? I war a bit oneasy, an' I be ashamed of it." And Peleg gathered her into his arms just as he had done so many times when she wore the slat bonnet and met him after a long pull.

* * * * * * *

The doctor came, but found further consultation, which Sir James urged, useless. "He cannot recover,"

said that professional, shaking his head; "it is needless to annoy him. I will leave quieting medicine; but he will pass away slowly."

He slept, but the breathing was puffy. Dearie had become dejected again—she could not perch but sat upon her feet just off the pillow.

After an hour or more he awakened and motioned Sir James to him. "Great Heart," said he, "*they* took me over, but they said I must come back and bid you good-bye, and that you had something, the last, for the sack. Let me speak first lest I grow too feeble. Put away the cushion, the brass pin and the tea, I do not wish to make the cup I once thought I should like to pass over the bar to *him*, for I saw him *over there*, and his gatherings are so heavy that they hold him down in the depths—the darkest, darkest depths; he crawls under the load, and it will be long before it lightens the weight of a feather, *they* tell me; and *she*—I did not see her, but I shall soon and help her bear her gatherings. Now, tell me."

"*He* was pursued by the officers of the law," said Great .Heart, in soft tones, "and fled to the river—and jumped in. And she—good Isaac, do not be troubled about her—we have found her, and are caring for her in her last hours. She is deeply penitent and remembers you with the old love of your childhood. I fear you cannot be here long; will you bear a message from me to Mary and Richard?"

Isaac nodded and pressed the hand that held his. "Tell them that I have found their child, and all is well with her," and the voice trembled and the lips quivered.

"And tell them of you, of you, Great Heart? Yes, I shall tell them of you, too. I am glad *she* is going," he whispered as if his mind wandered quickly to what was dearest to him. "And dearie, where is dearie?"

"Time's up," came from a muffled voice, and the bird rolled upon the pillow—dead.

"Yes, it is, dearie, it is. The earthly gatherings, Great Heart, are all in, the sack is full. When it is opened in the Great Beyond—"

"Will be found, with the cup in the mouth, good Isaac," whispered Great Heart.

"I hope so!" and he smiled, gazed at something and stretched out his hands joyfully as he said, "The road is through beautiful meadows; and oh! I see so much, so much to do; but there is no hurry, for eternity is before me. Come, Great Heart, come with me—it is so beautiful, the grass, the flowers, the birds! Ah! yes, I see dearie; there she is, just ahead of me. Good-bye." He held tightly the hand that had given him strength when earthly trouble had wellnigh crushed him, he closed his eyes, a long-drawn breath—it was his last.

Sir James was alone with the dead. Miss Hamper had just been called to Helen Harold, and she too—was gone.

Blue Bottle Court was awed next day, when two hearses stood at the corner, one for the brother with dearie by his side, one for the sister. A simple prayer for each by Sir James himself, listened to by Susan and Samuel, Meg, Martha, Peleg, Joe, and Rover. Into Isaac's hand Meg put a rose, white, with the faintest tint of blush, but with the petals unfolded. She had heard the story of his life, and knew he was ready for its seed. Into Helen's hand she slipped a bud, crushed and faded, smoothed the wavy hair from the beautiful brow and whispered to the dead, "I forgive you."

The same stately carriage which had drawn up at Blue Bottle's corner once before when Isaac awaited its owner, Sir James, to alight from it and strike his doorstep in passing, now stood behind the hearses; into it entered Great Heart, followed by Joe and Rover. The little cortege passed slowly through busy, bustling London. Railway coaches soon bore living and dead to Wenham. The latter were laid side by side in Hopeful Hollow, the pretty green home of the villagers who were taking their last sleep. The former stepped back to the cares and pleasures, sorrows and joys of life, better fitted for their own rest when it should come upon them.

* * * * * * *

Meg would be eighteen on the morrow. Miss Thump's little parlor was bright, the flowers were bloom-

ing, for she had guests. Miss Hamper, Mr. Hamper, and Meg, first; soon Joe and Rover, then Sir James. The mantua-maker had just gone, after completing, to the satisfaction of the little lady, a black satin frock, which was laid away with a new muslin kerchief beside it, edged with a rare lace, and to be fastened on the morrow by Samuel in the brooch. Mother Martha had chosen silk as less showy, but the trimmings were none the less costly, and Peleg had found that the reason he was so ill at ease when "dressed up," was because he had never worn clothes made expressly for him, and now that such had been made under the direction of Meg's guardian, he found himself looking forward happily to the wearing of them. Gaff had been similarly treated, but was not present.

"We are all here," said Joe, as they drew around the table for cake and coffee — Susan still adhered to mild beverages—"but the blind man."

"And he is here, too," said Miss Thump, looking at Sir James.

"Yes," said that gentleman; "fortunately Rover and I selected the corner of Lunley and the Wilton, and are indebted to Miss Thump for what we ascertained, for by the handkerchief which I well knew, I saw the one who owned it must be the one I sought. As the blind man, I learned also of the intentions of the wily Trout, and feared him not; as Wallace, I also drew from him needed knowledge, and found him harmless; and as John Hansom, I found out the honesty and worthiness of Mother Susan's good son, who, I, as the blind beggar, saw upon the day when we gathered in this same little room for prayer over the unknown dead, loved Meg, the child of one whom I loved in life, although she never thought me more than a friend, and whose wrongs I have spent years in making right. But I have not done this alone, a something I cannot define has aided me. Chance it was not, and perhaps I shall never know its name, its source—never realize its power till I have followed those whom I loved on earth."

"Meg," and he turned to the girl who had drawn to his feet at the allusion to her mother, the same low stool

which she sat upon when the straggling vine filled with sap budded, and burst into leaf and flower—"Isaac Harold, who was once like the rest of us, but whom trouble, as you have heard, made whimsical, and sickness deformed, found this in the cloak which Mr. Hamper has told you was what he sought on the day after you were found; it is water-marked, as you see, but how it came so I cannot tell if the garment was about you. I lend it to you, for it may be of use legally, but you must return it. Read it, her dying request—and to me. Tell me, who will, that chance put it into my hands."

The girl took the paper, with awe unfolded it and read:

"JAMES LAMBERT:

"Find my child, my Meg. I shall leave her. All is dark about me. Wrong has been done my Richard, but I can't find the way to him. It is black as midnight. Care for my Meg, my girl. Dan—ha! he is coming. My baby and I are going.

"MARY."

Fastened to this was the showing of lawful marriage between Richard Ray and Mary Seebold Radnor, for, as said, the old major claimed for her at the altar the name of her family.

"My poor mother! No wonder the washing, washing would never leave the shore. How could the waters be quiet when such dreadful things were done?" and sobbing, she laid her head on the knee of Sir James, just as her mother had done years before, in mourning over childish grievances.

When she grew calmer, he raised her, drew her close to his heart, kissed her tenderly, reverently, as we once saw him put his lips to the paper in the little room of Isaac Harold.

"Now," said he, turning to Samuel, "you must not forget the paper found upon her—her name, her date of birth, and the asking whoever found her to care for her, with the money tied about her, which somehow escaped the wretch who would have seized it to the last farthing.

But let us talk no more of him. Justice and conscience are doing for him what are beyond the law's power."

"Here," said Mr. Thump after accepting the trust, "is the ring I slipped from the finger of Maria lest it might be needed for identification," and he drew it from his pocket.

"Let it be laid away with the handkerchief," said Meg, her eyes again filling as she took it in her hand.

Good-nights were early said. Samuel and Meg walked slowly and somewhat behind the rest as they went to Wreckers for the last time; and Miss Thump, as she closed the door upon the porch, said to herself, "Humph! I always knew he wasn't blind."

So, all were happy but Tom Barley, who, after the officers had smothered the fire upon the bed, fell upon that article, and lay there till Polly traced him next day, and grasped, shook and swung him upon his feet.

The beadle was a pompous little man, but he was punctual, and had the church open in season, but could admit no one, for the marriage was to be private.

The Rev. Peerie, in no way loth to sanction the contract, for the fee would not be stinted, was robed early. The bride, in a pretty gray silk travelling dress, leaned a little nervously on the arm of Sir James: the groom, proud and manly, stepped quickly up the aisle supporting a sprightly little lady in black satin. Mr. and Miss Hamper, Gaff, Joe and Rover, little Charley, his father and mother, followed.

The little parlor held the waiting breakfast. The Rev. Peerie again asked a blessing upon those assembled; the family Bible bore the first inscription upon its marriage record; a notice was prepared for the Daily Bee. The Lunley's were again brought to door and window, curb and gate, but this time not with sorrow. The equipage was crested—lion's claw and eagle's beak; the footman was stolid—all footman are; the driver was pompous, the horses proud stepping. The Lane was honored; it knew it, they knew it. The happy pair appeared, were driven away, while from the porch of the cottage were hurled old slippers, handkerchiefs waved,

kisses thrown, and from every Lunley went up a "God bless them—the children of Susan Thump."

In due time the village of Wenham welcomed Mr. and Mrs. Thump, for Sir James had prepared it for their coming, and the court held that the pretty bride was heiress of Rayless House and all that its master left. It was reopened and made the home of Mother Martha and Uncle the year round. He always longed for green grass and clean, sweet smelling water. And Snatcher found rest, anchored upon a lake within sight. She never again had a tired look.

Ivandale was sold.

Sir James rebuilt the home of William Seebold, and of it Joe took charge, for its owner travelled some and spent much time in London; but summer brought him there when Meg, Mother Susan, and the little ones came too.

Gaff, after awhile, parted with Cruiser, and in time became captain and chief owner of a "three mast."

Rover was content in city or village. His kennel was warm, and his food plenty.

When the little cottage was deemed too small—Samuel became both a barrister and a father—they moved to a stately home, where he could entertain as became one of his standing; and he never regretted throwing scruples to the wind, to enlist in the cause of an unknown Client.

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